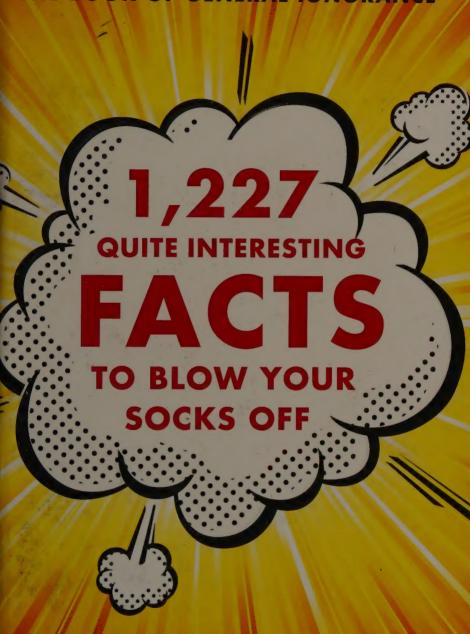
from the creators of the New Yark Times bestseller
THE BOOK OF GENERAL IGNORANCE



JOHN LLOYD, JOHN MITCHINSON,
AND JAMES HARKIN



1,227 QUITE INTERESTING FACTS

TO BLOW YOUR SOCKS OFF

by John Lloyd & John Mitchinson

THE BOOK OF GENERAL IGNORANCE

THE BOOK OF ANIMAL IGNORANCE

IF IGNORANCE IS BLISS, WHY AREN'T THERE MORE HAPPY PEOPLE?: SMART QUOTES FOR DUMB TIMES

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

THE SECOND BOOK OF GENERAL IGNORANCE

also by John Lloyd (with Douglas Adams)

THE MEANING OF LIFF

THE DEEPER MEANING OF LIFF

1,227 QUITE INTERESTING FACTS

TO BLOW YOUR SOCKS OFF

Compiled by John Lloyd, John Mitchinson, and James Harkin

with the QI Elves Anne Miller, Andy Murray, and Alex Bell



W. W. Norton & Company New York • London



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First published in Great Britain in 2012 by Faber and Faber Ltd under the title 1,227 QI Facts to Blow Your Socks Off

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Manufacturing by Courier Westford

ISBN 978-0-393-24103-7

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110 www.wwnorton.com

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd.
Castle House, 75/76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT

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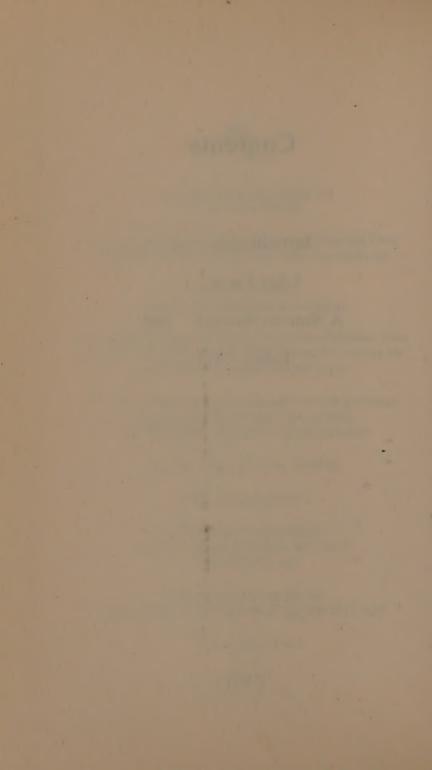
Contents

Introduction vii

1,227 Facts 1

A Note on Sources 309

Index 311



Introduction

I am no poet but, if you think for yourselves
as I proceed, the facts will form
a poem in your mind.

MICHAEL FARADAY (1791–1867)

The son of a village blacksmith from the backwoods of Cumbria in northwest England, Michael Faraday was one of the greatest experimentalist in history and the greatest experimentalist of them all. He left school at 14 with only the most rudimentary education, and taught himself everything he knew by reading the books that passed through his hands during his seven-year apprenticeship to a London bookbinder.

From these humble beginnings he rose to become the greatest scientist of his day, the man to whom we owe the electric motor and our daily use of electricity itself. A century later, Albert Einstein kept a picture of him on his study wall, alongside Isaac Newton and James Clerk Maxwell.

The authors of this book work for Quite Interesting Ltd, a British company that makes *QI*, the BBC's multiple award-winning TV game show about interesting information.

Like Faraday, we read a lot of books—on any and every conceivable subject, and the more madly random the better.

None of us claim to have an ounce of Faraday's genius, but all three of us, despite the fact that we each went to college (43, 31, and 16 years ago respectively), count ourselves as essentially self-educated.

We have achieved this together over the last ten years by applying the QI Research



Method, which can be expressed in a single line. It is to "read all of anything (even the footnotes) but write down *only* what you, personally, find interesting." This not only reduces, by several orders of magnitude, the essentially infinite amount of available information in the universe, but it also has the delightful side effect that we really do "learn something new every day."

For instance, until 20 minutes ago, when we started writing this introduction, none of us knew that Michael Faraday (as in so many other ways) was more than 150 years ahead of us. For he did exactly the same thing as we now do: he read every book he came across, but noted down only what he found "singular or clever."

Core QI research always begins like this, in nuggets. Each bit is then added to our database, expressed in the clearest and sparest form that we can manage.

This simple way of distilling knowledge leaves behind a rich residue of astonishment and delight, a small selection of which is before you.

Much of what we find lays bare, surprisingly often, what is not known, rather than what is known. Such information (or lack of it) can be returned to again and again without ever becoming dull. It bears thinking about, often. When Newton was asked how he had discovered the universal law of gravitation, he replied, "By thinking on it continually." Or, as another of our heroes, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, put it: "Do not become a mere recorder of facts, but try to penetrate the mystery of their origin."

So here, in bite-sized pieces, nestling among the known and the numbered, are



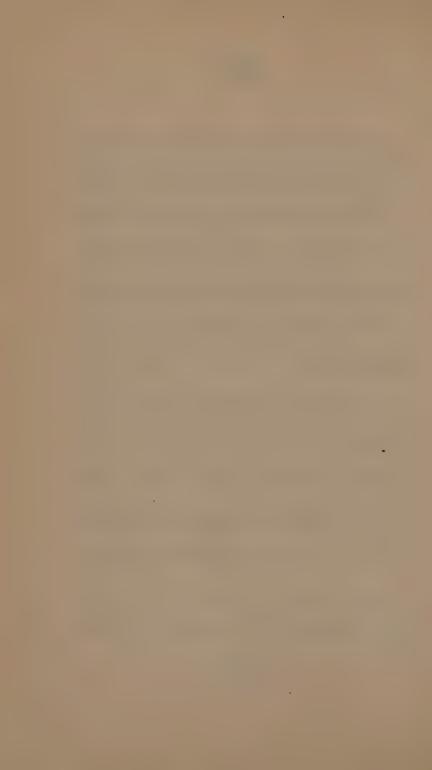
the mysteries of the enormous and the minuscule; of human comedy and tragedy; of heat, light, speed, life, art, and thought.

As Faraday urged his students, we also try to think for ourselves. But more uncannily than that, coaxing these 1,227 items into an order that felt comfortable and right has had the strange result that they have indeed come to form a kind of poem in the mind.

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we have enjoyed putting them together.

And, if you solve any of the mysteries, let us know.

JOHN LLOYD, JOHN MITCHINSON,
AND JAMES HARKIN



Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts. DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN (1927–2003)



1,227 QUITE INTERESTING FACTS

TO BLOW YOUR SOCKS OFF





Asteroid 1,227 is called Geranium.

The ozone layer smells faintly of geraniums.

The center of the galaxy tastes like raspberries.

The universe is shaped like a vuvuzela.

1

Light travels
18 million times faster
than rain.

The Queen is the legal owner of one-sixth of the Earth's land surface.

The name of the first human being in Norse mythology is Ask.

Everybody expected the Spanish Inquisition—they were legally obliged to give 30 days' notice.



Octopuses have three hearts.

Kangaroos have three vaginas.

Three of Fidel Castro's sons,
Alexis, Alexander, and Alejandro,
are named
after Alexander the Great.

The opening words of Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* are: "There were four of us."



40% of the human race did not survive beyond its 1st birthday.

One in ten European babies is conceived in an IKEA bed.

The human heart pumps enough blood in a lifetime to fill three supertankers.

The word "time" is the most commonly used noun in English.



10% of all the photographs in the world were taken in the last 12 months.

Between 1838 and 1960, more than half the photos taken were of babies.

The words written on
Twitter every day
would fill
a 10-million-page book.

In 2008, a man in Ohio was arrested for having sex with a picnic table.

1

The average person walks the equivalent of three times around the world in a lifetime.

The world's population spends 500,000 hours a day typing Internet security codes.

The first book ever printed in Oxford had a misprint on the first page:
they got the date wrong.

For 100 years, the flag of the tropical Turks and Caicos Islands in the West Indies mistakenly featured an igloo.



One-third of Russians

believe that
the Sun revolves around the Earth.

46% of American adults believe that the world is less than 10,000 years old.

46% of American adults can't read well enough to understand the label on their prescription medicine.

At least 75% of convicted criminals are unable to read or write.

0

Beyoncé Knowles is an 8th cousin, four times removed, of Gustav Mahler.

Shostakovich wrote his 8th Symphony in a henhouse.

Argentina is the 8th-largest country with the 8th-largest Jewish population.

January 8, 1835, is the only day in history that the USA had no national debt.



Italy's biggest business is the Mafia. It turns over \$178 billion a year and accounts for 7% of GDP.

George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein had their shoes hand-made by the same Italian shoemaker.

The designer of Saddam's bunker was the grandson of the woman who built Hitler's bunker.

Churchill's secret bunker was in Neasden.
It was so horrible he went there only once.



In his first year at Harrow,
Winston Churchill was bottom
of the whole school.

The Irish poet Brendan Behan became an alcoholic at the age of eight.

Leonardo da Vinci worked on the *Mona Lisa* for 15 years. By the time he died in 1519, he still didn't consider it finished.

When the *Mona Lisa* was stolen from the Louvre in 1911, one of the suspects was Picasso.



Most diamonds are at least 3 billion years old.

There are enough diamonds in existence to give everyone on the planet a cupful.

A burning candle creates
1.5 million tiny diamonds
per second.

Under extreme high pressure, diamonds can be made from peanut butter.



The US tax code
is four times as long
as the complete works of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, and King Charles I all had pierced ears.

An "earworm" is a song that gets stuck in your head.

Over 100 billion neutrinos pass unnoticed through your head every second.



IKEA

is the world's 3rd-largest user of wood and sells 2 billion Swedish meatballs a year.

In Afghanistan and Iraq it takes 250,000 bullets (three tons of ammunition) to kill each insurgent.

More British veterans
of the Falklands conflict
have committed suicide since the war
than were killed during it.

A language dies every 14 days.

1

The world's largest pearl weighs 14 pounds.

On average, American doctors interrupt their patients within 14 seconds.

There are over 14 billion light bulbs in the world but fewer than 14 million Jews.

People earning over \$21,000 a year are the richest 4% on the planet.



There are eight times as many atoms in a teaspoonful of water as there are teaspoonfuls of water in the Atlantic.

There are more living organisms in a teaspoonful of soil than there are people on Earth, and a billion times more in a ton than there are stars in the Milky Way.

Charles Darwin calculated that English soil contained 50,000 worms an acre.

In 1999, Darlington Football Club acquired 50,000 worms to irrigate their waterlogged pitch.

They all drowned.



Three and a half Olympic swimming pools could hold all the gold ever mined in the world.

In 2011, Birds Eye sold
225 billion frozen peas:
enough to fill
40 Olympic swimming pools.

If all the Birds Eye waffles sold in a year were stacked up, they would be 474 times higher than Mount Everest.

Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Everest, was a professional beekeeper. When filling in forms, he always gave his occupation as "apiarist."



The 10,000 trillion ants in the world weigh about the same as all the human beings.

If the 5 trillion spiders in the Netherlands took to eating humans rather than insects, they'd consume all 16.7 million Dutch people in just three days.

Alfred Kinsey, author of
Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948),
had a collection of 5 million wasps
and could insert a toothbrush
into his penis, bristle-end first.

Biologically speaking, "bugs" are insects that suck.

1

Biologists cannot agree on definitions for the words "species," "organism," or "life."

Behavioral biologists do not agree on what constitutes "behavior."

Psychologists cannot agree on what "personality" means.

Anthropologists cannot agree on the meaning of the word "culture" or on the meaning of the word "meaning."



Abulia n.
The inability
to make decisions.

Astasia n.
The inability
to stand up.

Aprosexia n.

The inability
to concentrate on anything.

Apodysophilia n.
A feverish desire
to rip one's clothes off.



If all the Lego bricks ever manufactured were clipped on top of one another, they would make a tower ten times as high as the distance to the Moon.

Liechtenstein, the world's 6th-smallest country, is the world's largest exporter of false teeth.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, having all your teeth removed and replaced with false ones was a popular 21st-birthday present.

The road signs
of the Austrian village of Fucking
are set in concrete
to deter thieves.



London,
with a population of over 8,000,000,
is not a city,
though the City of London,
with a population of about 7,000,
is.

According to the Forestry Commission,

London is

"the largest urban forest in the world."

In 1894, *The Times* of London estimated that by 1950 the city would be nine feet deep in horse manure.

The Roman name for Paris was

Lutetia,

which translates into English
as "Slough."

In 1811, nearly a quarter of all the women in Britain were named Mary.

In 1881, there were only six men in Britain named Derek.

Only 4 Clives, 13 Trevors, and 15 Keiths were born in the UK in 2011.

Naughty racehorse names
that managed to escape
the Jockey Club censor include
Hoof Hearted, Peony's Envy,
Wear The Fox Hat, and Sofa Can Fast.

9

In 2012,
the Advertising Standards Authority
ordered a Northampton-based
furniture store to stop
advertising its prices
as "Sofa King Low."

Caterpillars make no noises other than chewing—though *Phengaris rebeli* strums its bottom like a guitar.

Every year,
Peruvians eat more than
60 million guinea pigs.

In Switzerland, it is illegal to keep just one guinea pig.



98% of British homes have carpeted floors. In Italy, only 2% do.

In Japan only 2% of adoptions are of children;
98% are adult males aged 25 to 30.

It's unsafe for travelers to rely on "St. Christopher" anymore:

he was removed from
the calendar of saints
in 1969.

10% of US electricity
is made from
dismantled Soviet atomic bombs.



Until 1913, children in America could legally be sent by parcel post.

There are 5.9 calories in the glue of a British postage stamp.

All the batteries on Earth store just ten minutes of the world's electricity needs.

Ancient Greek democracy lasted for only 185 years.

The ancient Greeks had no word for religion.

China is the world's largest supplier of Bibles:

one factory in Nanjing prints

a million a month.

The dialing code for Russia is 007.

Collectively speaking, humans have spent longer playing *World of Warcraft* than they have existed as a species separate from chimpanzees (5.93 million years).

0

Charette n.

An intense flurry of activity to finish something by a deadline.

Muntin n.

The thin strip of wood or metal that divides the panes of glass in a window.

Nikhedonia n.

The pleasurable anticipation of success before any actual work has been done.

Smout n.

A small, unimportant Scottish person.

John Cleese's father's surname was Cheese.

Cleese grew up ten miles from Cheddar and his best friend at school was named Barney Butter.

Digestive biscuits
have no particular digestive qualities.
In the USA it is illegal to sell them
under that name.

In 2010, the BBC spent nearly £230,000 on tea, but only £2,000 on biscuits.

Caffeine is made of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen: the same as cocaine, thalidomide, nylon, TNT, and heroin.



The same man invented heroin and aspirin in the same year:
Felix Hoffman, 1897.

Heroin was originally marketed as cough medicine.

Worldwide sales of cocaine
earn more than
Microsoft, McDonald's, and Kellogg's
combined.

More than 7,000 Americans die each year and 1,500,000 are injured as a result of doctors' bad handwriting.

1

Fewer than 5% of blind or visually impaired people in the UK can read Braille.

Attempting to swim the Channel from France to England has been illegal since 1993.

The water-flow of the Ganges is a state secret in India.

In 2012, Apple Inc. had more cash in the bank than the US government.



Mozart loved billiards: he had a billiard table right next to his piano.

If you scaled a billiard ball up to the size of the Earth, it would have mountains three times higher than anything on the planet.

In 1903, its first year of trading, Gillette sold just 168 razor blades.

The first advertising jingles were written down in newspapers; readers were expected to sing them themselves.



There are more than three times as many PR people in America as there are journalists.

The Nazis made it illegal on pain of death for apes to give the "Heil Hitler" salute.

All but one of the ravens at the Tower of London died from stress during the Blitz.

British spies
stopped using semen as invisible ink
because it began to smell
if it wasn't fresh.



Because Tonto means "stupid" in Spanish, when *The Lone Ranger* was shown in Latin America, he was called Toro, "bull."

Florence Green,
the last veteran of the First World War,
died in February 2012. Asked what it was
like to be 110, she replied,
"Not much different to being 109."

On her 120th birthday,
Jeanne Calment (1875–1997),
the oldest person ever recorded,
said, "I only have one wrinkle and
I'm sitting on it."

The US retail industry makes \$6.8 billion a year from gift cards that no one redeems.



In the 12th century, the Danish army consisted of seven men.

In the 17th century, the salary of the Governor of Barbados was paid in sugar.

In the 18th century, the French navy buried their dead in the ship's hold.

In the 19th century, tobacco was used for "rectal inflation": blowing smoke up the anus to resuscitate the drowned.



Cardiff
has more hours of sunlight
than Milan.

Glasgow is a sister city with Nuremberg, Bethlehem, and Havana.

> Toasters were banned in Havana until 2008.

The Dyslexia Research Center is in Reading.



The technology behind smartphones relies on up to 250,000 separate patents.

The human brain takes in 11 million bits of information every second, but is aware of only 40.

The water in a blue whale's mouth weighs as much as its entire body.

The ancient Romans discovered parrots could speak and taught them to say "Hail Caesar." When they got bored with this, they took to eating them instead.



The United States of America maintains a military presence in 148 of the 192 United Nations countries.

On average, every square mile of sea on the planet contains 46,000 pieces of rubbish.

In 1251, Henry III was given a polar bear by the king of Norway. He kept it in the Tower of London, on a long chain so that it could swim in the Thames.

The tadpoles of the South American paradoxical frog are larger than the frog itself.

Historical Catholic clergy include Bishop Boil, Bishop Boom, Bishop Broccoli, Bishop Bolognese, Bishop Busti, Bishop Butt, and Bishop Bishop.

Kuku kaki kakak kakak ku kayak kuku kaki kakek kakek ku is an Indonesian tongue-twister meaning "My sister's toenails looked like my grandfather's."

In the 2009 Formula One season, 12% of Grand Prix drivers
were named Sebastian.

People in Victorian Britain
who couldn't afford chimney sweeps
dropped live geese
down their chimneys instead.



You are three times more likely to die in a plane crash than you are to be eaten by a mountain lion.

Gerbils can smell adrenaline
but tests in airports showed
they can't tell the difference
between terrorists
and people who are scared of flying.

If you drilled a tunnel straight through the Earth and jumped in, it would take you exactly
42 minutes and 12 seconds
to get to the other side.

A medium-size cumulus cloud weighs about the same as 80 elephants.



Fred Baur (1918–2002), the designer of the Pringles can, had his ashes buried in one.

Fred is Swedish for "peace."

Nobles present at the 18th-century
battle of Bravalla between
Sweden and Denmark included
Hothbrodd the Furious,
Thorulf the Thick, Birvil the Pale,
Roldar Toe-Joint, Vati the Doubter,
Od the Englishman, Alf the Proud, and
Frosti Bowl.

The Queen of England is related to Vlad the Impaler.



When customers visited the first supermarkets in the UK, they were afraid to pick up goods from the shelves in case they were told off.

Women buy 80% of everything that is for sale.

Between 1928 and 1948, 12 Olympic medals were awarded for Town Planning.

On a clear, moonless night the human eye can detect a match being struck 50 miles away. In the US between 1983 and 2000, there were 568 plane crashes. 51,207 of the 53,487 people aboard got out alive: a survival rate of 96%.

Harry Houdini could pick up pins with his eyelashes and thread a needle with his toes.

The Sami people of northern Finland use a measure called *Poronkusema*: the distance a reindeer can walk before needing to urinate.

The Inca measurement of time was based on how long it took to boil a potato.



Potatoes were illegal in France between 1748 and 1772.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) liked to eat fruit while it was still attached to the tree.

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the great Victorian actor-manager, once hailed a taxi and got in. Absorbed in his work, he sat silently reading in the back.

When the cabbie eventually asked,
"Where to, guv?" Sir Herbert spluttered,
"Do you really think I would give
my address to the likes of you?"

On average, most people
have fewer friends
than their friends have.
This is known as the "friendship paradox."

1

Blissom vb
To bleat with sexual desire.

Eye-servant n.
One who works only when the boss is watching.

Hemipygic adj.
Having only one buttock;
half-assed.

Marmalize vb
To give someone
a thrashing.



The modern world's first international sporting fixture was a cricket match played in 1844 between Canada and the USA.

Canada won by 23 runs.

Baseball—the name and the game—was invented in England in the 1750s.

Baseball legend Babe Ruth always wore a cabbage leaf under his cap to keep his head cool. In South Korea, this is considered unsporting, unless the player has a doctor's note.

"Soccer" is not an Americanism.

It's short for "Association Football"
and was popularized by
Charles Wreford-Brown, captain
of the English national team 1894—95.

James Naismith, a Canadian,
invented basketball in Massachusetts
in 1891. It was 21 years
before it occurred to anyone
to cut a hole in the bottom of the basket.

Captain John Smith of Pocahontas fame was the first man to use the word "awning."

Aerosmith has made more money from *Guitar Hero* than from any of their albums.

Ferrari is the Italian equivalent of Smith.



98% of the 7 billion billion billion atoms in the human body are replaced every year.

Mongolia's largest airport is named after Genghis Khan.
He had more than 500 wives and a vast number of children:
1 in 10 people in Central Asia today are his direct descendants.

Anophthalmus hitleri is a blind beetle found only in five caves in Slovenia.

Named after Hitler in 1933, it is now endangered due to collectors of Nazi memorabilia.

Hitler's home phone number was listed in *Who's Who* until 1945.

It was Berlin 11 6191.



At least 99% of all the species that ever existed have left no trace in the fossil record.

No scientific experiment has ever been done (or could be done) to prove that time exists.

If you could fold a piece of paper 51 times, its thickness would exceed the distance from here to the Sun.

Charles Blondin crossed Niagara Falls several times on a 1,000-foot tightrope: blindfolded, in a sack, on stilts, carrying a man on his back, and cooking an omelet in the middle.



Michael J. Fox's middle name is Andrew.

Emile Heskey's middle name is Ivanhoe.

David Frost's middle name is Paradine.

Richard Gere's middle name is Tiffany.



1 in 50 Americans executed for murder had the middle name "Wayne."

1 in 50 Scots are heroin addicts.

1 in 50 Americans claim to have been abducted by aliens.

1 in 50 words in the lyrics of the winning entries of the Eurovision Song Contest is "love."



More people go to church on Sunday in China than in the whole of Europe.

The lead singer of Iron Maiden has a day job as a
Boeing 757 pilot.

A greeting card
that can play "Happy Birthday"
has more computing power
than existed in the whole world in 1950.

You are 14% more likely to die on your birthday than any other day.



Oranges and lemons smell different due to chemically identical molecules that are mirror images of each other.

An orange is really just a left-handed lemon.

Moon dust smells like gunpowder.

A typical microwave oven uses more electricity keeping its digital clock on standby than it does heating food.

As it grows,
sweet corn makes a squeaking noise
like two balloons
rubbing against each other.



Emissions from car exhausts are responsible for more deaths every year than road accidents.

You can legally buy cannabis in the US in the form of birdseed:
the feathers of birds that eat it acquire a particularly glossy sheen.

Fidel Castro
estimated that he saved
ten working days a year
by not bothering to shave.

Wild Bill Hickok's brother Lorenzo
was nicknamed
"Tame Bill Hickok."



From 1912 to 1948,
painting was an Olympic event.
In 1924, Jack Yeats,
brother of the poet W. B. Yeats,
took the silver:
Ireland's first-ever Olympic medal.

William Blake's one-man exhibition of paintings in 1809 received only one review. The critic described him as a lunatic.

In 1891, Claude Monet won 100,000 francs in the French national lottery.

Pigeons can tell the difference between impressionist paintings by Monet and cubist works by Picasso.

They can even tell when the Monets are hung upside down.



There are no cubes in Cubism.
Cézanne's theory was that everything could be broken down into cylinders, spheres, and cones.

Tour de France riders need to eat the equivalent of 27 cheeseburgers a day.

Lightning strikes the Earth 8.6 million times a day or about 100 times a second.

A single bolt of lightning contains enough energy to cook 100,000 pieces of toast.

1

Pepsi was originally called "Brad's Drink."

7-Up
was originally called
"Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda."

West Side Story
was originally called
East Side Story.

Bank of America was originally called Bank of Italy.



Victoria Woodhull ran for president 48 years before women got the vote.

The smallest known dinosaur was about four inches tall and weighed less than a chihuahua.

Each year, drug baron Pablo Escobar had to write off 10% of his cash holdings because of rats nibbling away at his huge stash of bank notes.

The first-ever edition of the *Daily Mirror* came with a free mirror.

After two weeks of wear, a pair of jeans will have grown a 1,000-strong colony of bacteria on the front, 1,500–2,500 on the back, and 10,000 on the crotch.

If all the salt in the sea were spread evenly over the land, it would be 500 feet thick.

The eruption of Krakatoa in 1883 was the loudest sound in recorded history.

It was heard 3,000 miles away in Mauritius.

Summer on Neptune lasts for 40 years, but the temperature is minus 328°F.



Summer nights in the Faroe Islands are so well illuminated that between May and July the lighthouses are turned off.

In the 1st century AD most ships in the northern hemisphere sailed only between May and September.

William Carstares (1649–1715)
was the last man in Britain
to be given the thumbscrew.
As torture was illegal in England,
he had to be taken to Edinburgh.

Mussolini tortured his enemies by forcing them to swallow massive doses of castor oil.



The second-largest lake in Bolivia is called Lake Poopó.

It's not a freshwater lake.

The whole of Shakespeare contains only about 20,000 different words— less than half the vocabulary of the average English speaker today.

The whole of Liechtenstein can be rented for \$70,000 a night, for a minimum of two nights.

It sleeps 900.

St. Vitus is the patron saint of oversleeping.



The International Space Station is as roomy as a five-bedroom house and travels at 17,500 mph.

A marshmallow traveling at sea level would not begin to melt from friction caused by air resistance until it reached Mach 1.6 (1,218 mph).

When a medium in a trance offered to answer any question,
Groucho Marx asked,
"What's the capital of North Dakota?"

The popular Los Angeles beverage Original New York Express Iced Coffee is made in a factory in Singapore.



Cameroon is home to the Eton tribe. The Eton word for "thank you" is abumgang.

Arabic words are written right to left, but
Arabic numbers left to right.
Arabic speakers reading anything
with a lot of numbers
have to read in both directions
at once.

In 2010, the Catholic Church had an income of \$97 billion.

Trombone is French for "paperclip."



The word "gas" was invented by
the Flemish chemist

Jan Baptist van Helmont (1579–1644).
He also invented the word blas
but it didn't catch on.

The word "gasoline"
doesn't come from "gas." It comes from
Cazeline—after John Cassell,
founder of the publisher Cassell & Co.,
who was the first to sell it commercially.

Peter Mark Roget (1779–1869) invented the thesaurus and the slide rule.

Edwin Beard Budding (1775–1846) invented the lawnmower and the adjustable wrench.



In 1928, the Solomon Islands pidgin for "adjustable wrench" was spanner he go walkabout, and a "saw" was this fella pull-him-he-come-push-him-he-go brother belong ax.

The Zulu for "Jack-in-a-Box" is udoli ohlala ebokisini ukuthi ufuna ukusabisa abantu abaningi.

The Malay for "slate" is sejenis batu berwarna kelabu kebiru-biruan yang selalu digunakan sebagai atap ruman.

Wanklank
is Dutch for
a discordant noise.

1

In 2010,
Ghana banned
the sale of secondhand underpants.

No one has ever seen an atom.

They're too small to be seen
by a microscope and can't be counted
or weighed individually.

Plato thought that the smallest particles of matter were tiny right-angled triangles.

Since at least the time of Pythagoras in 500 BC, no sensible educated person has believed the Earth was flat.

(1)

A snowflake that falls on a glacier in central Greenland can take 200,000 years to reach the sea.

The King James Bible has inspired the lyrics of more pop songs than any other book.

In 2001, the World Christian Encyclopedia counted 33,830 different Christian denominations.

Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate Easter, Christmas, or birthdays.



For 48 years
after canned food was invented,
people who wanted to eat it
had to use a hammer and chisel.
The can opener wasn't invented
until 1858.

The screwdriver was invented a hundred years before the screw.

It was originally used to extract nails.

"Grading" was invented at Cambridge University in 1792 by a chemistry tutor named William Farish.

Margaret Thatcher
was part of the team that invented
Mr. Whippy ice cream.



A single sperm contains 37.5 MB of DNA information.

One ejaculation represents a data transfer of 15,875 GB, equivalent to the combined capacity of 62 MacBook Pro laptops.

70% of all animals in the jungle rely on figs for their survival.

In Antigua, "fig" means banana.

Linnaeus named the banana

Musa paradisiaca because he thought it

might have been the forbidden fruit

of the Garden of Eden.



The citizens of Kuwait
celebrated the end of the first Gulf War
by firing weapons into the air.
20 Kuwaitis died as a result of bullets
falling from the sky.

The main predators of flamingos are zookeepers.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, zookeepers killed all the venomous insects and snakes in London Zoo, in case it was bombed and they escaped.

The boa constrictor is the only living animal whose common name is exactly the same as its scientific name.



In the 318 years between 1539 and 1857, there were only 317 divorces in England.

At the 1900 Paris Olympics, events included Live Pigeon Shooting and Long Jump for Horses.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, it is explicitly illegal in Britain to use a machine gun to kill a hedgehog.

In ancient Greek the word "idiot" meant anyone who wasn't a politician.



The Icelandic phone book is ordered by first name.

The human eye can detect 10 million different shades of color.

Wombats have cubic feces.

Harvard University
has the largest ant collection
in the world.



It takes a photon 40,000
years to get from the center of the Sun
to its surface, but only 8.3 minutes
to get from there to the Earth.

For water to flow 110 yards through the ground down a 1° slope takes 5 days through gravel, 13.7 years through sand, and 137,000 years through clay.

In 1969,

Apollo 11 returned from the Moon in half the time it took to get from Boston to New York by stagecoach in 1769.

New York City drifts about one inch away from Europe every year.



Between 1960 and 1977, the secret number authorizing US presidents to launch nuclear missiles was 00000000.

Jimmy Carter once sent a jacket to the dry-cleaner's with the nuclear detonation codes still in the pocket.

Worried about his grades at law school, Richard Nixon broke into the Dean's office—only to discover that he was top of his class.

The highest scoring word in Scrabble is *oxyphenbutazone*, potentially earning 1,178 points.

(It's a drug used to treat arthritis.)



A coal-fired power station
puts 100 times more radiation into the air
than a nuclear power plant
producing the same amount of energy.

Treasure Island in Lake Mindemoya on Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron is the largest island in a lake on an island in a lake in the world.

The strongest creatures on Earth are gonorrhea bacteria.

They can pull 100,000 times . their own body weight.

A dog has the same ecological footprint as two Toyota Landcruisers; a cat the same environmental effect as a Volkswagen Golf; two hamsters the same as a plasma TV.



Humans
have the same number
of hair follicles
as chimpanzees.

Gorillas and potatoes have two more chromosomes than people.

The average person who lives to be 75 will have spent six years dreaming.

The word *ambisinistrous* is the opposite of ambidextrous; it means "no good with either hand."



James Garfield,
20th president of the USA,
could write Greek with one hand
while writing Latin with the other.

Young Neanderthal girls had bigger biceps than an adult male human.

The second man to go over
Niagara Falls in a barrel,
Bobby Leach, survived the fall
but later died as a result of
slipping on a piece
of orange peel.

An orange is a berry but a strawberry isn't.



Vatican City has
the highest crime rate in the world.
Though the resident population
is only just over 800,
more than 600 crimes
are committed there each year.

90% of the crime in Helmand province is committed by the Afghan police.

50% more US soldiers committed suicide in 2012 than were killed in action in Afghanistan.

In 117 AD, Emperor Hadrian declared attempted suicide by soldiers a form of desertion and made it a capital offense.

1

Jack Bauer,
the lead character in the TV series 24,
killed 112 people
in the first five seasons of the show.

The longest hangover in medical literature lasted four weeks.

It belonged to a 37-year-old man from Glasgow.

In 1715, a group of Jacobite rebels failed to take Edinburgh Castle because their rope ladders were six feet too short.

The first manager of the first McDonald's franchise was called Ed MacLuckie.



Coca-Cola in the Maldives is made from seawater.

A "riot" in England and Wales
must legally involve
a minimum of 12 people.
Under US federal law
it's only three people
and in Nevada
only two.

More than 1 in 20 soccer injuries are caused by celebrating goals on the pitch.

Slavery was not made a statutory offense in the UK until April 6, 2010.



Diagnosed with pleurisy,
Sir Robert Chesebrough, the inventor of
Vaseline, decided to coat himself
in his product from head to foot.
He survived and lived to be 96.

In 1915, Charlie Chaplin entered a Charlie Chaplin lookalike contest in San Francisco. Not only did he not win, he failed even to make the final.

Male fruitflies rejected by females drink significantly more alcohol than those that have had a successful encounter.

In Inuktitut,

iminngernaveersaartunngortussaavunga

means

"I should try not to become an alcoholic."

0

2,520 is the smallest number that can be exactly divided by all the numbers 1 to 10.

2.5 million romance novels
were pulped and added to the tarmac
of the UK's M6 toll motorway
to make it more absorbent.

In 1999, more than 3,000 people were hospitalized after tripping over a laundry basket.

In 1997, 39 people in the UK found themselves in the hospital with tea-cosy-related injuries.



Deipnophobia n.

The fear of dinner party conversations.

Nomophobia n.

The fear of being out of cellphone contact.

Metrophobia n. Fear of poetry.

Lachanophobia n. Fear of vegetables.



Since 1990, the number of people living in poverty in China has fallen from 85% to 15%.

A "knot" is something tied in a single piece of rope or line.

Something that joins two ropes together is a "bend."

A baby oyster is called a "spat."

More chimpanzees, gorillas, and bonobos are eaten by people every year than there are in all the zoos in the world.



In the 19th century, sausages were marketed as "bags of mystery."

If a vampire were to feed once a day
and turn each of his victims
into a vampire,
the entire human population of the planet
would become vampires
in just over a month.

Relative to our galaxy, the Earth is traveling through space at more than 500,000 mph.

The Sun takes 220 million years to orbit the galaxy, a journey it has made 20 times so far.

1

Abbey-lubber n. A lazy monk.

Acrochordon n.

A wart that hangs down like a string.

Apport n.
Something that appears out of thin air: the opposite of a vanishing.

Autotelic adj.
Worth doing for its own sake.

Although Shakespeare's works run to more than a million words, only 14 exist in his own handwriting:

12 of them are his signatures and the other two are "by" and "me."

George W. Bush named

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
as his favorite childhood book. It was
published when he was 23 years old.

In 2012, Britain's Eurovision entrant, Englebert Humperdinck (76), was not only the oldest of the contestants, he was older than more than 20 of the countries they represented.

Swans do not sing (before dying or otherwise), although one species, the Whistling Swan, whistles a bit.



There are ten times as many stars in the known universe as there are grains of sand in the world.

The ties bought in America for Father's Day each year would stretch from New York to Rome.

There are thought to be 100,000 uncharted mountains under the sea.
Only 1,000 or so have ever been mapped.

Aborigines, whose culture reaches back to the last Ice Age, have names for (and can locate) mountains that have been under the sea for 8,000 years.



Just like humans,
British cows moo in accents
specific to their region.

95% of all data in the world is still stored on paper.

Most of it is never looked at again.

The common shrew protects itself from predators by dying of fright.

The next person to walk on the Moon will almost certainly be

Chinese.



Almost half of all babies in China are born by Caesarean section.

Europeans consume half the world's cocoa.

A single zinc mine in Namibia uses a fifth of the country's electricity supply.

Per gram per second, more energy runs through a sunflower than through the Sun itself.



It takes ten times
as much energy to heat water
as it does to heat iron.

It takes ten times as much energy to turn water into steam as it does to bring it to the boil.

It takes an hour to soft-boil an ostrich egg and an hour and a half to hard-boil one.

It takes between 70,000 and 150,000 crocuses to make 2 pounds of saffron.



Alexander the Great washed his hair in saffron to keep it shiny and orange.

In 1999, a four-year-old girl turned yellow after drinking too much Sunny Delight.

Russian has no word for "blue," only two different words for "light blue" and "dark blue."

Andy Warhol always wore green underpants.



25 million Bibles were printed in 2011, compared to 208 million IKEA catalogs.

The English version of Wikipedia has 50 times more words than the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Up to 2010, Wikipedia had taken 100 million person-hours to write: about the same amount of time that the population of the USA spends watching TV ad breaks in a single weekend.

There is more information
in one edition of the New York Times than
the average person
in 17th-century England
would have come across in a lifetime.



Early reports of Einstein's
Theory of General Relativity,
were covered in the *New York Times*by their golfing correspondent.

The historic news of the first manned powered flight by the Wright Brothers first appeared in the magazine Gleanings in Bee Culture.

Dune, by Frank Herbert, the world's bestselling science fiction novel, was rejected more than 20 times before being accepted by a publisher of car manuals.

Ernest Hemingway bought the shotgun that he used to kill himself at Abercrombie & Fitch.



Leonardo da Vinci
was the first person to observe
the curvature of the human spine.
Until then everyone had assumed
that it was straight.

Rosa whitfield is a rose
named after actress June Whitfield.
As she pointed out,
"The catalogue describes it as
'superb for bedding,
best up against a wall."

Someone who is *cock-throppled* has an extremely prominent Adam's apple.

The symbols used by !\$%@ing cartoonists to indicate swearing are called grawlixes.



In 2011, a pair of silk panties that belonged to Queen Victoria sold for almost \$15,000.

Anne Boleyn,
King Henry VIII's second wife,
liked to watch him playing tennis
in his underwear.

Jeremy Bentham's body has been dressed in moth-resistant underwear since 1939.

A male Emperor moth can smell a female from six miles away.

0

A babalevante is someone who makes feeble jokes.

Babeship
is another word for
infancy.

Borborygmi are stomach rumbles.

Buggerare
is Italian for
"to cheat" or "swindle."



If you have a pizza with radius z and thickness a, its volume is pi*z*z*a.

In 1998, 10,113 American women insured themselves against
Virgin Birth
at the millennium.

The first motorist to be fined for speeding in the UK was
Walter Arnold in 1896.
He was doing 8 mph in a 2 mph zone.

The first London Underground trains were nicknamed "sewer trams."

The world's lightest metal is 100 times lighter than styrofoam and can rest on a dandelion puff without damaging it.

Graphene, the world's strongest material, is a million times thinner than paper but 200 times stronger than steel.

To break through a sheet of graphene as thick as plastic wrap would take the force of an elephant balanced on the point of a pencil.

The pressure in the deepest ocean, at the bottom of the Marianas Trench, is equal to the weight of ten brown bears balancing on a postage stamp.



All polar bears are Irish: they're descended from brown bears that lived in Ireland over 10,000 years ago.

More than half the world's population is under 25 and more than half of it is bilingual.

Established writers and artists are
18 times more likely
to kill themselves
than the general population.

People with schizophrenia are three times more likely to smoke than the average person.

Zischeln

is a useful German verb meaning "to whisper angrily."

The Italian verb asolare
means "to pass time in a delightful but
meaningless
way."

Hungarian has no words
for "son" or "daughter,"
but nine specific words
for different kinds of brother or sister.

In North Welsh,
the word for "now" is *rwan*,
in South Welsh it is *nawr*,
the same word spelled backward.

(1)

Gold
is officially suitable for consumption
by vegetarians, vegans, and
members of all religious groups.

The Victorians made tiepins out of badgers' penis bones.

Some parts of Tasmania are so fertile that the topsoil is 70 feet deep.

Trinity College, Cambridge, has won more Nobel Prizes than the whole of Italy.



The human body has 100 trillion cells, each one a 10,000th the size of a pinhead but containing enough DNA instructions to fill 1,000 600-page books.

Every three seconds,
the Sun emits more neutrinos
than the number of atoms
in all the humans who have ever lived.

Neutrinos are 100,000 times smaller than electrons, but there are so many of them that they may outweigh all the visible matter in the universe.

If an atom were the size of the Solar System, a neutrino would be the size of a golf ball.



The man who sees to the needs of VIPs in the official presidential guest house in Washington DC is named Randy Bumgardner.

The founder of Pan American Airlines

was called

Juan Trippe.

The Archbishop of Manila from 1974–2003 was called Cardinal Sin.

Robert Burns was never called Rabbie or Robbie—though he did occasionally call himself Spunkie.

1

The film Jaws was based on a novel by Peter Benchley.

When he couldn't think of a title, his father, Nathaniel, suggested What's That Noshin' On Ma Leg?

As soon as tiger shark embryos develop teeth they attack and eat each other in the womb.

If the three quarks in a hydrogen atom were scaled up to the size of garden peas, the hydrogen atom would be 1,000 miles across.

If all the land in Finland
were distributed equally,
each Finn would have 14% more space
than Heathrow Airport's shopping area.

0

Human saliva contains a painkiller called *opiorphin* that is six times more powerful than morphine.

The average American produces
10,000 gallons of saliva in a lifetime:
about the same amount of water as leaks
from the average American home
in a year.

The platypus and the echidna are the only mammals that could make their own custard: they both lay eggs and produce milk.

The Chupa Chups logo was designed by Salvador Dalí.



4,000 McDonald's hamburgers
(as many as you could get from one cow)
are eaten every minute.

Every year, 4 million cats are eaten in Asia.

In 2011, Chinese billionaire Long Liyuan was murdered at a business lunch by means of poison in his slow-boiled cat-meat casserole.

When eating jelly babies, nearly eight out of ten people bite off the heads first.



More gold is recoverable from a ton of personal computers than from 17 tons of gold ore.

The gold dissolved in the world's oceans is estimated to be worth \$475 trillion:

about 30 times
the US public debt.

In 1917, John D. Rockefeller
could have paid off
the whole US public debt on his own.
Today, Bill Gates's entire fortune
would barely cover two months' interest.

Tyrannosaurus rex (65 million years ago) is closer in time to us than to Diplodocus (150 million years ago).



There are about 6,900 languages in existence but more than half the world's population uses only 20 of them.

In English, the name of every number shares a letter with each neighbor.

One shares an O with two, which shares a T with three, which shares an R with four, which shares an F with five, which shares an I with six—and so on indefinitely.

Archimedes' number myriakis-myriostas

periodu myriakis-myriston

arithmon myriai myriades
is one followed.by 80 quadrillion zeroes.

In 2010, YouTube was watched 700 billion times, but 99% of the views were of only 30% of the videos.

1

The information transmitted by the Hubble Telescope each week would fill a shelf of books two-thirds of a mile long.

In 1900, all the world's mathematical knowledge could be written in about 80 books; today it would fill more than 100,000.

In 1900

L. Frank Baum published two books:

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz and

The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows.

Charles Darwin's editor thought *The Origin of Species* was too obscure.

He suggested a book about pigeons, as "everybody is interested in pigeons."

1

In the first month of its life, a silkworm puts on 10,000 times its birth weight.

A female ferret will die if she doesn't have sex for a year.

A six-inch catfish has more than 250,000 taste buds.

A full Kindle weighs a billionth of a billionth of a gram more than a brand-new one.



There are more than 1,200 species of bat in the world and not one of them is blind.

There are 4,800 species of frog in the world, but only one of them goes "ribbit."

Every human being starts out as an asshole: it's the first part of the body to form in the womb.

90% of baby rabbits are eaten by predators.



51% of British women under 50 have never been married: twice as many as in 1980.

Kanye North and Kanye South
(but not Kanye West)
are parliamentary constituencies
in Botswana.

The animal rights group PETA claims that cows can suffer humiliation if people laugh at them.

Wagamama is Japanese for "selfish."



In 2009, Exxon made \$19 billion profit but received a \$156 million federal tax rebate.

Only 2% of women describe themselves as beautiful.

In the 1950s, 3-D films were known as "deepies."

Loch Ness
is deep enough
and long enough
to contain the entire
population of the world
ten times over.



40% of the electricity in Pakistan goes missing, half of it stolen: if there's a power cut (which is often), they just steal the wires.

In 2011, British trains were delayed by 16,000 hours because of people stealing metal parts from the railways.

After Einstein died,
his brain was pickled,
sliced into 240 cubes, and
left in a box marked "Costa Cider"
for 20 years.

Sir Walter Raleigh's devoted widow Elizabeth kept his decapitated head with her in a velvet bag for 29 years.



Forflitten adj.
Overwhelmed
by unreasonable
and out-of-proportion
scolding.

Forwallowed adj.
Weary with being tossed about.

Rhinorrhea n.
The medical condition
otherwise known as
"a runny nose."

Subitize vb
To perceive the number of objects in a group without actually counting them.



An *acrocomic* is someone with long hair.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*,
the word hasn't been used
since it was coined in 1626.
Until now, that is.

The word "unfriend" first appeared in print in 1659.

"OMG"
was first used in a letter
from a British admiral
to Winston Churchill
in 1917.

In 2012,
a pair of twins in Kenya
were named "Obama" and "Romney."



As a reward for winning the part of Harry Potter, the 11-year-old Daniel Radcliffe was allowed to stay up and watch Fawlty Towers.

Durham University
offers a Harry Potter course.
It includes the topic
"Gryffindor and Slytherin:
Prejudice and Intolerance in the Classroom."

The word "school" comes from the ancient Greek for "free time."

In particle physics, a "barn" is an area that covers a billionth of the cross-section of a silk fiber. It's called a barn because (in subatomic terms) it's so huge.



In 2010, twice as many Britons died in accidents in their own homes as in traffic accidents.

The names Honda and Toyota derive from Japanese words for different kinds of rice field.

In French, Hungarian, Spanish,
Italian, Portuguese,
Latvian, Serbian, Croatian,
Bosnian, Montenegrin, and Tagalog,
the words for "time" and "weather"
are the same.

Britain
is the windiest country
in Europe.



The Inuit use the same word, sila, to mean both "weather" and "consciousness."

There are five categories of hurricane.

The slowest outpaces a cheetah;

the fastest beats the world's

fastest roller-coaster

(149 mph).

There are at least 300 earthquakes a year in the UK, but only 11 people have ever died in one.

There is no known scientific way
of predicting earthquakes.
The most reliable method is
to count the number of missing cats
in the local paper: if it trebles,
an earthquake is imminent.



The amount of water on Earth is constant, and continually recycled over time:

some of the water you drink

will have passed through

a dinosaur.

95% of the lead in British army bullets comes from recycled materials.

A squishop is a squire who is also a bishop.

Muammar is Arabic for "long-lived."



A newborn giant panda weighs less than a cup of tea.

The CIA reads up to 5 million tweets a day.

85% of the clicking on web ads is done by 8% of the people.
Since 2008,
the number of clicks has halved.

The 6-trillionth, 8-trillionth, 9-trillionth, and 10-trillionth digits of pi are all fives.

1

Under Chairman Mao,
every Chinese family
was obliged to kill a sparrow a week
to stop them eating all the rice.
The project was ineffective because
sparrows don't eat rice.

Barley
has twice as many genes
as people.

Shanghai has twice as many skyscrapers as New York.

Scotland
has twice as many giant pandas
as Conservative MPs.

1

Sending a man to the Moon and finding Osama Bin Laden cost the US government about the same amount of time and money: ten years and \$100 billion.

IMAX projectors weigh as much as hippos.

Their bulbs cost \$6,000 each
and are bright enough to be seen
from the International Space Station.

The International Space Station has cost more than 30 times its own weight in gold.

In 2005,
Americans spent 6 billion hours
filling in tax forms,
at an estimated cost of \$265 billion.



Between 1948 and 1998, 20,362 Israelis were killed in wars and 20,852 were killed on the roads.

The American TV sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer trained as an Israeli sniper.

Snipur is Icelandic for "clitoris."

Taking cocaine increases the chance of having a heart attack within the hour by 2,400%.



Oystercatchers don't catch oysters.

Cows carry cowpox but chickens don't carry chickenpox.

Cocks don't have cocks. In 97% of bird species, the males don't have penises.

The rooster on the Corn Flakes box is called Cornelius.

They chose a rooster because the word *ceiliog*,

Welsh for cockerel,

sounds a bit like Kellogg.



Welsh
has no single words for
"yes" or "no."

Russian
has no word for
"bigot."

French
has no word for
"shallow."

has no word for "interesting."



Uranium
is 40 times more common
than silver
and 500 times more common
than gold.

In Spanish, the word *esposas* means both "wives" and "handcuffs."

Boghandler is Danish for "bookseller."

Serbia is the world's leading exporter of raspberries.

In 1956, there were only 12 cars on Ibiza.

About half a million mice live in the London Underground.

The Companies Act (2006) is the longest act in history; it is so complex that most British companies unwittingly break the law six times a day.

Per head of population,
Britain has 13 times
as many accountants
as Germany.



The average pencil can write 45,000 words, or a single line 35 miles long.

Venus rotates so slowly on its axis that its day is longer than its year.

Until the 1960s,
the only reliable pregnancy test
was to inject a woman's urine
into a female African clawed frog.
If the woman was pregnant,
the frog would ovulate within 12 hours.

Chemotherapy is a by-product of the mustard gas used in the First World War.

The year after the American Civil War ended, a fifth of Mississippi's state budget was spent on artificial limbs for wounded soldiers.

More than 90%
of all the blackcurrants
grown in Britain
go into Ribena, a fruit drink.

Nutmeg is illegal in Saudi Arabia because it is hallucinogenic if consumed in large quantities.

Mushrooms are more closely related to humans than to plants.

The first holiday organized by Thomas Cook was a temperance outing in the East Midlands.

Beijing, Seoul, and Tokyo all mean "capital" in their respective languages.

Athens is the only capital city in Europe where the air is more polluted outside than inside.

Skoda
is Czech for
"shame," "damage," or "pity."

At least 109 journeys between adjacent London Tube stations are quicker to walk.

QI is the most commonly played word in Tournament Scrabble. It's pronounced "chee" and means "life force" or "energy" in Mandarin.

There are at least 27 million slaves
in the world today,
more than were ever seized from Africa
in the 400 years of the slave trade.

Slaves in America in 1850 cost the equivalent of \$40,000. The going rate today is \$90.

More than 80% of the world's population takes caffeine, in tea, coffee, or cola, every day.

There is one and a half times more caffeine in milk chocolate than in Coca-Cola.

A lethal dose of chocolate for a human being is about 22 lbs., or 40 Hershey bars.

A single M&M is enough to kill a small songbird.

As a baby, Oliver Cromwell was abducted by his grandfather's pet monkey.



To keep someone to prison in the UK costs £45,000 a year: one and a half times as much as it would take to send them to Eton.

Fictional Old Etonians include
James Bond, Captain Hook,
Bertie Wooster, Tarzan's father,
and Mr. Darcy from *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

St. Brigid of Ireland, the 6th-century abbess of Kildare, was noted for the miracle of transforming her used bathwater into beer for visiting clerics.

It costs more to make the cardboard box that Shredded Wheat comes in than it does to make the Shredded Wheat itself.



The word botulism
comes from the Latin botulus,
meaning "a stomach full of delicacies."
Half a pound of botulinum toxin is
enough to kill
the entire human population of the world.

Botox is made from botulinum toxin.

Almost all the botox in the world is made in a single factory in Ireland.

The average British woman spends £100,000 on make-up in a lifetime.

All blue-eyed people are mutants.

The first ones appeared
as recently as 5,000 years ago.

The scaly anteater, the banded anteater, and the spiny anteater are not anteaters even though they all eat ants and are called anteaters.

In the 1950s, to allow babies of students at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, to enter the premises, they were re-defined as cats.

William E. Boeing, founder of
United Airlines,
had a pet Pekingese called
General Motors.

General Electric is the only company remaining from the original Dow Jones index of 1896. Since then it has had fewer than half as many CEOs (4) as the Vatican has had popes (11).



A basterly gullion is "a bastard's bastard."

Batology is the study of blackberries.

Botony means "having three knobs."

Seven Viagra tablets are sold every second.



The mute swan is not mute.

Engastration is the stuffing of one bird with another.

Cows eat only grass but have 25,000 taste buds: two and a half times as many as humans.

In American Samoa, it is illegal to beg with the aid of a public address system.



A new owl species is discovered approximately every ten years.

An adult produces enough hydrogen in their urine each year to drive a car 1,677 miles.

In 2012, the population of Facebook passed 1 billion.

If it were a country, it would be the 3rd-largest in the world.

Before the Renaissance, three-quarters of all the books in the world were in Chinese.



About 200,000 academic journals are published in English each year.

The average number of readers per article is five.

The average numbers of readers of any given published scientific paper is said to be 0.6.

There are two Cs in the word Icelandic, but there is no letter C in the Icelandic language.

Katujjiqatigiittiarnirlu
is Inuktitut for
"simplicity."



A barnacle's penis can be up to 20 times the length of its body.

27,000 trees are felled each day for toilet paper.

The average lavatory seat
is much cleaner
than the average toothbrush.
Your teeth are home to 10,000 million
bacteria per square inch.

The pleasant smell of earth after rain is caused by bacteria in the soil and is called *petrichor*—from Greek *petros*, "stone," and *ichor*, "the fluid that flows through the veins of the gods."

The muscles that close a crocodile's jaws
exert a force equivalent to
a truck falling off a cliff,
but the muscles that open them
are so weak that
they can be kept shut by a rubber band.

The Royal Mail spends £1 million a year on a billion red rubber bands.

British postmen use
2 million of them every day.

A hammerhead shark

can be rendered completely immobile

for 15 minutes by turning it over

and tickling its tummy.

Tümmler
is German for
a bottle-nosed dolphin.



99% of Austrians are German, though most Austrians insist that they aren't.

Austrians like to claim that Hitler was really a German, whereas Mozart was an Austrian, when the reverse is true.

Beethoven was of Belgian extraction.

There are no moles in Ireland.



If all the asteroids in the Solar System were lumped together, they'd be smaller than the Moon.

There are six vehicles
and 50 tons of litter
on the Moon
left behind by the Apollo missions.

Because there is no weather on the Moon, the footprints of the 12 men who walked on it are still there.

Most astronauts become two inches taller in space.



Google earns \$20 billion a year from advertising, more than the primetime revenues of CBS, NBC, ABC, and FOX combined.

69% of people in the rear of an airplane survive crashes, compared to 49% at the front.

20% of people in the UK believe they have a food allergy, but only 2% actually do.

The American secret service tried to spike Hitler's carrots with female hormones to change him into a woman.



Almost 2,000 carrot seeds will fit into a teaspoon.

An estimated 18 million spoons, together weighing as much as four blue whales, go missing in Melbourne every year.

Melbourne used to be called Batmania.

Alice,
the 3rd-largest town
in Australia's Northern Territory,
used to be called
Stuart.



40% of all bottled water sold in the world is bottled tap water.

The Antarctic is a continent entirely surrounded by oceans; the Arctic is an ocean almost entirely surrounded by continents.

The average American absorbs 34 GB of information a day, though half of it is obtained from playing video games.

Half the Saxon aristocracy were killed at the battle of Hastings in 1066.



More than twice as many people are killed by vending machines as by sharks.

Placebos are 30% more effective as an antidote for depression than drugs.

If a tree were planted for each Coca-Cola sold, we could reforest the Earth in three years.

The inventor of "Best before" dates—
originally for milk—
was Al Capone's brother Ralph.



After his wife's death, a heartbroken Benjamin Disraeli found that she'd kept all the hair from the haircuts she'd given him in 33 years of marriage.

> Elizabeth Taylor lived to be 79 but she never learned to boil an egg.

Boring, Oregon
has become a "sister community"
with Dull, Scotland.

More than 50% of koalas have chlamydia.



Ants can survive in a microwave: they are small enough to dodge the rays.

Anthophobia is the fear of flowers.

The Greek national anthem has 158 verses, but only two of them are ever sung.

The national anthem of Spain has no words.



Prince Charles
is the longest-serving
heir to the throne in British history.
He has held the position
for 60 years.

Some parts of Antarctica have had no rain or snow for 2 million years.

Bubblewrap
was first produced in a
New Jersey garage in 1957.
Its inventors were trying to make
easy-wipe textured wallpaper.

There is no such thing as a vegetarian snake.
Snakes eat nothing except other animals.



For 249 years, the tallest building in the world was Lincoln Cathedral.

Angel Falls, Venezuela, is 17 times higher than Niagara.

A typical bird's feathers weigh more than twice as much as its bones.

Only 35%
of the average person's
Twitter followers are
actual people.



"Day dapple" is an old Irish term
for the time of day when
a person can no longer
be distinguished
from a bush.

The ancient Greek for ostrich is *strouthokamelos*, or "sparrow-camel."

"Influenza"
is Italian for "influence":
heavenly bodies
were once thought
to affect our own.

The Republic of San Marino has eight times as many doctors per person as any other country in the world.

Humans
have been hunter-gatherers
for 99% of their history.

Ostriches can be trained to herd sheep.

The French for "badger"
is blaireau,
which also means
"shaving brush."

WTF
is the acronym of the
World Taekwondo Federation.



In 2011, the Internet reached 13.7 billion pages: one for every year since the Big Bang.

The entire Internet weighs about the same as one large strawberry.

A male right whale
is half the size of a male blue whale
but has testes five times bigger:
each one weighs as much
as a large horse.

Ted Turner owns 50,000 bison.

Kestrels
can locate voles from the sky
because of ultraviolet light
reflected by their urine.

Henry VIII had a Groom of the Stool
whose duty was to see that
"the house of easement be sweet and clear":
in other words,
to wipe the king's bottom.

Sitting on the lavatory for eight hours uses the same number of calories as one hour's jogging.

It was 33 years
after toilet paper was invented
in Green Bay, Wisconsin,
that it could finally be advertised as
"splinter free."

Sudan has more pyramids than Egypt.

Steve Jobs was half Syrian.

His annual salary
as CEO of Apple
was \$1.

"Forty"
is the only number in English
that has its letters
in alphabetical order.

43 million \pounds 1 coins currently in circulation are forgeries.



Since 2012, all new 5p and 10p coins issued by the Royal Mint have been magnetic.

The highest-value notes issued by the Bank of England are Giants (£1 million) and Titans (£100 million).

The chemical name for titin, the world's largest known protein, is 189,819 letters long.

In Japan, Tintin is called Tantan
because Tintin
is pronounced "Chin-Chin"
and means "penis."



Kim Il-Sung, founder of North Korea, was born on the day the *Titanic* sank.

Kim Il-Sung's grandson,
Jong-Nam, was fired as heir
after being arrested trying to
enter Japan on a false passport
to visit Disneyland.

In the last 60 years,
more than 23,000 North Koreans
have defected to South Korea.
Only two Koreans
have gone in the opposite direction.

Korea is Finnish for "gorgeous."

The exchange rate in Vietnam is about 20,000 dongs to the dollar.

It costs the US mint over 11 cents to make each 5-cent coin.

"Hey Jingo!"
is a conjuror's call
for something to appear—
the opposite of
"Hey Presto!"
which calls for it
to be gone.

Between 1917 and 1940, the cure for patients with syphilis was to give them malaria.

[160]



Gatwick,
the name of the UK's
2nd-largest airport,
means "the farm where goats are kept."

During the 2010 World Cup,
100 bar staff at the pub chain
Clover Taverns
changed their names to
Wayne Rooney.
The company has since gone bankrupt.

In 2007, Robert Stewart of Ayr was put on the Sex Offenders Register for having sex with a bicycle.

> In 1993, Karl Watkins of Redditch, Worcestershire, was jailed for having sex with pavements.

There is at least ten times as much crime on TV as there is in the real world.

Starbucks offers
87,000
different drink combinations.

Britons eat 97% of the world's baked beans.

The last private resident of 10 Downing Street was named Mr. Chicken.



Almost half of all Americans today are classified as "living in poverty" or "barely scraping by."

46.4% pay no income tax.

The US has more lawyers per capita than any country in the world and twice as many prisoners as lawyers.

The US has only 5% of the world's population, but almost 25% of its prison population.

Since smoking was banned in 2004, the main currency in US prisons is canned mackerel.

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Prisoners waiting to be executed on
Death Row in America
are given a physical beforehand,
to ensure they are fit enough to die.

In his last week on Earth,
Troy Davis, who was executed
in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2011,
was put on "death watch"
to stop him taking his own life.

The Death House at the State Prison in Huntsville, Texas, offers wheelchair access.

An estimated 150,000 people die in the UK every year because only 7% of Britons know how to give first aid.



When a Navajo baby
laughs aloud for the first time,
the family throws a party.
The person who made the baby laugh
provides the food.

The air breathed by a single person in an 80-year lifetime weighs more than a fully laden Boeing 747.

1968

was the only year of the 20th century
in which no member
of the British armed services
was killed on active service.

The London Underground has made more money from its famous map than it ever has from running trains.

1

In 2010, the Italian government had a fleet of 629,000 official cars: ten times as many as the US government.

Since its discovery in 1930, Pluto has traveled only a third of its way around the Sun.

Walter Schirra
is the only one
of the first six Americans in spacenot to have one of the Tracy brothers
in *Thunderbirds*named after him.

Sucking a king's nipples was a gesture of submission in ancient Ireland.



In Vanuatu pidgin,
Prince Charles is known as
nambawan pikinini blong Missus Kwin
and a helicopter is a
mixmaster blong Jesus Christ.

In 1995,
the number of TV programs in Britain
watched by over 15 million people
was 225.
By 2004, this had fallen to six.

In Romany, the word for television is dinilo's dikkaméngro or "fool's looking-box."

In the film industry, a "mickey" is a gentle camera move forwards.

It's short for "Mickey Rooney"

(a "little creep").

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Bacteria and amoebas are far more different from each other than amoebas are from people.

Two-thirds of all the people in the world who have ever lived to be 65 are still alive today.

There are 10,000 times as many photographs on Facebook as there are in the US Library of Congress.

Eight of the Earth's 88
naturally occurring chemical elements
were discovered
in the same mine in Sweden.



The Malay word for water is "air."

Kummerspeck ("grief bacon")
is German for the weight put on
from eating too much
when feeling sorry for yourself.

The Finnish word for pedant, pilkunnussija, translates literally as "comma fucker."

When he died in 1891, John Davey, a schoolmaster of Zennor, Cornwall, was the only person in the world that spoke Cornish.

He had kept the language alive by talking to his cat.

The first Olympian
disqualified for banned substances
was Hans-Gunnar Liljenwall of Sweden.
In the 1968 Mexico Games,
he had two beers
to calm his nerves
before the pistol shooting.

The first recorded incidence of air rage involved a passenger in First Class who shat on the food trolley after being refused another drink.

More than a third of the world's 43,794 airports are in the USA.

The world's largest cattle station, Anna Creek Station in South Australia, is larger than the state of Israel.



All ten species
of the most venomous snakes in the world
live in Australia.

Powerful acids in snakes' stomachs mean they will explode if given Alka-Seltzer.

The cost of fighting a libel action in the UK is 140 times greater than the European average.

After the battle of Waterloo, the Marquis of Anglesey had his leg amputated.

It was buried with full military honors in a nearby garden.

Folk healers in the Andes
diagnose patients with guinea pigs,
which apparently squeak
when close to the source of the problem.

In 2003, six monkeys were funded by the Arts Council of England to see how long it would take them to type the works of Shakespeare.

After six months, they had failed to produce a single word of English, broken the computer, and used the keyboard as a lavatory.

In 2001, seven Chilean poets held a reading in the baboon enclosure of Santiago Zoo to demonstrate that baboons are more receptive to poetry than the average Chilean.



By 2020, the number of men of marriageable age in China will outnumber the women by 30 million.

Leo Tolstoy's wife wrote out the drafts of War and Peace for him, in longhand,

'six times.

Zeus had five wives.

One of them was his aunt,
another was his elder sister,
and a 3rd one he ate.

In 1672, an angry mob of Dutchmen killed and ate their prime minister.



Half of the world's black pepper is produced in Vietnam.

Feeding canaries red peppers turns them orange.

The name
Canary Islands
comes from the Latin for
"Isle of Dogs."

Cat originally meant "dog."

The word comes from
the Latin *catulus*,
a small dog or puppy.



White rhinos and black rhinos are the same color.

Highways
in the western USA
are based on the
migratory routes
of bison.

The Alpine salamander's pregnancy can last for over three years.

Dragonflies flap their wings in a figure-eight motion.

1

In Bali, dragonflies are eaten with coconut milk, ginger, garlic, shallots—or just plain-grilled and crispy.

Salvador Dalí
was terrified of grasshoppers.
As a schoolboy, he threw such violent fits
of hysteria that his teacher forbade them
to be mentioned in class.

Kali is the Hindu goddess of death, violence, sexuality, and motherly love.

The name Mali means "hippopotamus" in Bamanankan, the main language of the country.



The Nigerian navy has four warships whose names all mean "hippopotamus" but in different local languages:

NNS Erinomi (hippo in Yoruba), NNS Enyimiri (hippo in Igbo), NNS Dorina (hippo in Hausa), and NNS Otobo (hippo in Idoma, Ijaw, Igbani, and Kalabari).

Over the years, the Royal Navy's fleet has included HMS Seagull, HMS Keith, HMS Tortoise, HMS Wensleydale, and HMS Cockchafer.

A baby cockroach is called a "nymph."

When Escoffier was head chef at the Carlton Hotel in London, he got his English clientele to eat frogs' legs by slipping them on to the menu as Nymphs of the Dawn.



As a young man in London in 1914,

Ho Chi Minh

worked for Escoffier

as a trainee pastry chef.

The South American revolutionary
Simón Bolívar
was, at various times, president of
Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru,
and Venezuela.

Venezuela is Spanish for "Little Venice."

In 17th-century Venice, women's high-heeled shoes could be more than 12 inches tall.

Beckets n.

The little loops for a belt on a pair of trousers or a raincoat.

Callypygian adj.
Having
beautiful buttocks.

Misophonia n.

Irrational rage and terror caused by the sound of people eating.

Sciapodous adj.

Having feet
large enough
to be used as umbrellas.



The composer Arnold Schoenberg was superstitious about the number 13.

As 7+6=13 he feared he would die aged 76.

And he did: on Friday, July 13, at 13 minutes to midnight.

William Herschel, discoverer of Uranus, lived to be 84—the same number of years that Uranus takes to orbit the Sun.

Asked by a priest, "Do you forgive your enemies?" the dying Spanish general Ramón Blanco y Erenas (1833–1906.) answered, "No. I don't have any enemies. I've had them all shot."

In 2007, a Bosnian called Amir Vehabovic faked his own death to see how many people would go to his funeral.

Only his mother turned up.



Baby koalas are weaned on their mother's excrement. It is consumed directly from their mother's bottom in the form of "soup."

In Antigua, lizard soup in considered an effective cure for asthma—
provided the patient isn't told what's in it.

The world's largest known crocodile and the world's smallest man are from the same island in the Philippines.

The Aztecs sacrificed

1% of their population every year,
or about 250,000 people.

They also sacrificed eagles, jaguars,
butterflies, and hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds have 2,000 meals a day and hibernate every night.

Seahorses
are the only fish with a neck
and the only family of animals
in which the male
gives birth.

Crocodiles have no lips and can hold their breath for an hour.

The Cornish for "breath" is anal.



Whenever the king of Swaziland rises from his seat, he must be greeted with cheers and gasps of astonished admiration.

In 1875, the king of Fiji
brought back measles
from a state visit to Australia
and wiped out
a quarter of his own people.

Queen Elizabeth I often drank two pints of strong beer for breakfast.

After weekend house parties at Sandringham, King Edward VII insisted on weighing his guests to make sure they had eaten well.

1

Lithuanian men
are 200 times more likely
to kill themselves
than Jamaican men are.

Nigeria makes more movies every year than the US.

Only three members of the United
Nations have failed to ratify the
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:
South Sudan, Somalia, and the USA..

Only three places in the world have ever changed from driving on the right to driving on the left:

East Timor (1975), Okinawa (1978), and Samoa (2009).



Iceland was once called "Butterland" because the grass was so rich it seemed to drip butter.

After Switzerland, the world's largest per capita gold reserves are held by Lebanon.

There are more than 35 places called Lebanon in the USA, at least 38 Springfields, and no fewer than 50 Greenvilles.

Boots fitted with springs were forbidden by the original Queensberry Rules for boxing. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*has a sentence that is 823 words long,
separated by 93 commas and
51 semicolons.

When Les Misérables was first published in 1862, Hugo sent a snappish telegram to his publisher to ask how it was selling.

The whole thing read, "?"

The publisher's reply was effusive, "!"

Ernest Hemingway's mother was so ashamed of his novel *The Sun Also Rises* that, when it was scheduled for discussion at her book club, she refused to go.

Within 200 yards of the flat in Islington where George Orwell had the idea for 1984, there are now 32 CCTV cameras.

1

In 2008,
an MI6 officer was interviewed
on a BBC TV magazine program.
Halfway through,
his mustache fell off.

Hitler's press secretary didn't approve of his mustache. "Stop worrying about it," said the Führer. "If it's not in fashion now, it will be soon, because I'm wearing one."

The shortest war ever fought was between Britain and Zanzibar on August 27, 1896. Zanzibar surrendered after 38 minutes.

When Rameses II's mummified body
was shipped to France in 1974,
it was issued with a passport.
The mummy's occupation was given as
"King (deceased)."



Barbara Cartland wrote more than 600 books. She dictated them to her secretary between one o'clock and half past three in the afternoon, lying on a sofa with a white fur rug and a hot-water bottle.

Barbara is Latin for "strange woman."

Judy Garland was 4 feet 11 inches tall: the same height as Joan of Arc and Queen Victoria.

In the 1930s, British women working for Directory Enquiries were required to be at least 5 feet 3 inches tall so they could reach the top of the switchboard.



Charles Dickens
invented 959 named characters.
Before deciding on the name Tiny Tim,
he considered Small Sam, Little Larry,
and Puny Pete.

Dickens's shortlist for Martin Chuzzlewit's surname included Sweetledew, Chuzzletoe, Sweetleback, and Sweetlewag.

John Steinbeck used 300 pencils to write his novel *East of Eden*.

The word pencil comes from a Latin word meaning "small penis."



When trying out a new pen, 97% of people write their own name.

> 90% of everything written in English uses just 1,000 words.

20% of all road accidents
in Sweden
involve an elk.

12% of all the Coca-Cola in America is drunk at breakfast.



Gongoozler n.

One who stares for a long time at things happening on a canal.

Gossypiboma n.
A surgical sponge accidentally left inside a patient's body.

Jentacular adj.
Breakfasty; breakfastish;
of, or relating to, breakfast.

Meupareunia n.

Sexual activity enjoyed
by only one of the participants.



Gorillas can be put on the pill.

The German for "contraceptive" is Schwangerschaftsverhütungsmittel. By the time you've finished saying it, it's too late.

On August 20, 1949,
time appeared to stand still
for several minutes,
when hundreds of starlings roosted
on the long hand
of Big Ben.

The correct adjective to describe a thrush is *turdoid*.



If a silkworm
is exposed to pure carbon dioxide,
it crawls around aimlessly,
apparently trying to remember
what it's supposed to be doing.

Eskimos use refrigerators to stop their food from freezing.

The Sun's core is so hot that a piece of it the size of a pinhead would give off enough heat to kill a person 99 miles away.

Every living thing can be anesthetized, even plants. Despite their successful use since the mid-19th century, no one really understands how anesthetics work.

0

A trained typist's fingers cover about 16 miles a day.

Every US president with a beard has been Republican.

The Bible is the most shoplifted book in the USA.

The world's biggest frog is bigger than the world's smallest antelope.



The dik-dik is a miniature antelope that can go for months without water but dies after a week without salt.

One-third of all the salt produced in the US is used to melt ice on roads.

British geologists have discovered more of the world's oil than the geologists of all the other nations put together.

After being annexed by the British Empire, the sarong-clad Burmese referred to their new overlords as "The Trouser People."



Toward the end of each afternoon,
Sir Philip Sassoon (1888–1939)
hauled down the Union Jack
that flew over his house
in case the colors
clashed with
the sunset.

Half of Napoleon's army at the battle of Eylau—30,000 men—were burglars.

The penalty for adultery in ancient Greece involved hammering a radish into the adulterer's bottom with a mallet.

Radishes were a lot longer and pointier in those days.

An octopus can ooze through an opening no bigger than its own eyeball.



Humans and elephants are the only animals with chins.

Sir Charles Isham,
a vegetarian spiritualist,
introduced garden gnomes
to England in 1847.
He hoped that they would attract
real gnomes to his garden.

Until the late 15th century, the word "girl" just meant a child. Boys were referred to as "knave girls" and female children were "gay girls."

The use of the English word "gay"
to mean homosexual
is older than the use of the term
"homosexual" to mean gay.



The Serpentine in London was the first manmade pond in the world designed to look as if it wasn't manmade.

Albanian has 27 words for different kinds of mustache and 30 for eyebrows.

In the 9th century,
Ireland was called "Scotia" and
Scotland was known as "Albania."

Six ten-billionths of the Sun is gold.

If the 1,200,000,000,000,000 tons of it could be extracted,
there would be enough to gild Scotland to the depth of half a mile.



Beavers have transparent eyelids so they can see underwater with their eyes shut.

The Old Testament book of Leviticus forbids the eating of cuckoos, ferrets, camels, swans, crabs, frogs, chameleons, eels, hares, snails, lizards, moles, ravens, ospreys, vultures, lobsters, owls, storks, herons, bats, ravens, pelicans, lapwings, prawns, and eagles.

1,000 baby eagles were eaten at the Archbishop of York's enthronement feast in 1466.

Zeppo Marx, the youngest of the Marx Brothers, designed the clamping device that held the atom bombs in place before they were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



Oprah is "Harpo" backwards.

Oprah Winfrey's real name is Orpah
(after the sister of Ruth in the Bible)
but no one could say or spell it properly
so she eventually gave up
correcting them.

The flowers of the coffee bush smell like jasmine.

Jasmine is a member of the olive family.

Marie is a member of the Osmond family.

Her first name is Olive.

In 1987, American Airlines saved \$40,000 by removing an olive from each salad in First Class.



In an average year in Britain, trousers cause twice as many accidents as chain saws.

100,000 cellphones
are dropped down the toilet
in Britain every year,
and 50,000
get run over.

People are 1% shorter in the evening than they are in the morning.

The London police employ 39% more people than the entire British navy.



Cranberries bounce when ripe:
another name for them is "bounceberries."
One that bounces seven times
is in perfect condition to eat.

Horripilation
is another word
for getting goosebumps.

The technical word for a French kiss is cataglottism.

Cockshut
is another word for twilight—
the time of day when chickens
are put to bed.



If all the time our eyes are shut when blinking is added together, we spend 1.2 years of our waking lives in pitch darkness.

Every time a woodpecker's beak hits a tree, its head is subject to 1,000 times the force of gravity.

The smallest trees in the world are the dwarf willows of Greenland.

They are two inches tall.

The world's smallest test tube
has a diameter
10,000 times narrower
than a human hair.

Antarctic islands include
Disappointment Island, Fabulous Island,
Desolation Island, Monumental Island,
Inexpressible Island, Pourquoi Pas Island,
Shag Island, Circumcision Island, and
Shoe Island.

In 2008, Usain Bolt set the world record for the 100 meters with one shoelace undone.

Every electron in the universe knows about the state of every other electron.

Honeybees
always know where the Sun is,
even if it's
on the other side of the world.



The national anthem of Bangladesh includes the lines:

"The fragrance from your mango groves Makes me wild with joy."

One in three men in Britain of Bangladeshi origin works as a waiter.

Towels are a central part
of the culture in Belarus,
even appearing on the country's flag.
At a traditional Belarusian wedding,
the bride walks to the church
dragging a towel.

13% of Belarus is swamp.

In 2011, a 61-year-old woman gave birth to her own grandson. The baby was conceived with an egg donated by her 35-year-old daughter.

The American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as a mental illness until 1973.

Sudan is the only country that still has crucifixion as an official form of capital punishment.

By the age of 18, the average American child will have seen 200,000 murders on television.



In German,
a Turnbeutelvergesser
is a boy who's too scrawny
for school sports and "forgets"
to bring his gym bag.

Schattenparker
is German for someone
who parks his car in the shade.

Depp means "twit" in German.

Thud!
the Discworld novel by Terry Pratchett,
is published in Germany as
Klonk!



The Basque word for "cold" is hotz.

The Russian word for "sock" is pronounced "no sock."

If you say the letters S.O.C.K.S.
aloud in English, you will find yourself
pronouncing the Spanish for
"it is what it is"
almost perfectly.

If you forget the tilde (~)
over an N when asking
how old someone is in Spanish,
you will end up asking them
how many anuses they have.

When Montenegro became independent from Yugoslavia, its Internet domain name went from being .yu to .me.

The Irish word *leis* (pronounced "lesh")
has four different meanings. *Bhí leis leis leis leis* means

"His thigh was naked also."

A bourdaloue was a gravy-boat-like receptacle that ladies would squeeze between their thighs if they needed to urinate at court in Georgian England.

George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld all have slime-mold beetles named after them.

Since 1700, new beetle species
have been discovered
at the rate of
one every six hours.

The short-circuit beetle is so named because it eats the lead covering of telephone cables.

Cartwrightia cartwrighti is a scarab beetle described by Oscar L. Cartwright.

As you are not supposed to name a species after yourself, he claimed to have named it after his brother.

Deathwatch beetles
attract mates
by repeatedly banging
their heads on the floor.

During his first teaching job in 1925,

Evelyn Waugh set out
to drown himself at sea,
but turned back
after being stung by a jellyfish.

The Irish name for jellyfish is smugairle róin, which literally translates as "seal's snot."

The French for a walkie-talkie is un talkie walkie.

The Eiffel Tower
has the same nickname
that Margaret Thatcher had:

La Dame de Fer ("The Iron Lady").



Crime, disease, and average walking speed increase by 15% as a city doubles in size.

People all over the world are walking 10% faster than they did a decade ago.

Airlines all over the world are flying 10% slower than they did in 1960 (to save on fuel costs).

As an apple falls to Earth, the Earth falls very, very slightly toward the apple. 0,

Isaac Newton served as MP for Cambridge but spoke in the House only once. He asked for a window to be closed because it was drafty.

> Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, married Oscar Wilde's first girlfriend.

Arthur Ransome, author of Swallows and Amazons, married Trotsky's secretary.

Two-thirds of all the poetry sold in the UK by living poets is by Seamus Heaney.

The Slavonic name for God is Bog.

In 1568, the Catholic Church condemned the entire population of the Netherlands to death for heresy.

In the 1930s, the Rev. Frederick Densham of Warleggan in Cornwall alienated his flock by painting the church blue and red, surrounding his rectory with barbed wire, and replacing - the congregation with cardboard cutouts.

Stalin had shamans thrown out of helicopters to give them a chance to prove that they could fly.



It is most likely to be raining at 7 a.m.

and least likely

at 3 a.m.

In Maori, the word Maori means "normal."

Princess Anne
was the only woman
not to be gender-tested
at the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Anne, Duc de Montmorency (1493–1567), was a French general and politician. He was named after his mother, Anne Pot.

Pol Pot,
the Cambodian dictator
responsible for the deaths
of 21% of his country's people,
was a former
geography teacher.

The Swahili word for a coconut is nazi.

"Mother-in-law" is an anagram of "Hitler woman."

Both Stalin and Hans Christian Andersen were the sons of a cobbler and a washerwoman.

In 1187, as a symbol of unity between their two countries, Richard I of England spent a night in the same bed as Philip II of France.

In 1381, Richard II made Chelmsford the capital of England for one week.

In 1517, Richard Foxe,
the blind bishop of Winchester,
founded Corpus Christi College, Oxford.
On his first visit to the new college,
he was led twice around the main quad
to make it seem bigger than it really was.

In 1953, Keith Richards's musical career began as a choirboy singing at the Queen's coronation.

No male jaguar
has ever successfully mated
with a female tiger:
if it were to happen, the resulting animal
would be known as
a "jagger."

Early draft names for
Walt Disney's seven dwarfs included
Flabby, Dirty, Shifty,
Lazy, Burpy, Baldy,
and Biggo-Ego.

Strictly speaking, the plural of dwarf is,dwarrows.

In 2011, Toyota announced that the official plural of Prius was Prii.



Research using rabbits has led to 26 Nobel Prizes for Physiology or Medicine.

To process their food with maximum efficiency, rabbits swallow up to 80% of their own feces.

The Sumatran rabbit

is so rare and shy

that the nearest humans
have no word for it in their language.

Bugs Bunny is not a rabbit but a hare.

The sloth is the only animal named after one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

During the rainy season, its metabolism slows down so much that it can starve to death on a full stomach.

Dolphins shed the top layer of their skin every two hours.

Paper can be recycled only six times.

After that, the fibers

are too weak to hold together.

A 2011 study by Nobel Economics laureate
Daniel Kahneman of 25 top Wall Street
traders found that they were
no more consistently successful
than a chimpanzee tossing a coin.



A 2011 study in the journal *Psychology*, *Crime and Law* tested 39 British senior

managers and CEOs and found that they

had more psychopathic tendencies

than patients in Broadmoor.

Since 1980, the salaries of executives in FTSE 100 companies have risen by 4,000% compared to 300% for their employees.

An average pay raise of 50% in 2010 took the annual earnings of the directors of Britain's FTSE 100 companies to £2.7 million each: over 100 times the national average.

At the end of 2011, the FTSE index stood at 5572: 1358 points lower than it was at the end of 1999.

Google
was originally called
Back-Rub.

The acnestis
is the part of the back
that is impossible to scratch.

The most common treatment for angina is nitroglycerin.
It comes in pills, sprays, or patches.

All-Bran is only 87% bran.



Malo kingi is a jellyfish named after Robert King, an American tourist who died in Australia after being stung by one.

The man after whom
Parkinson's disease is named
was once arrested for plotting
to assassinate George III
with a poisoned dart.

The man after whom
Tourette's syndrome is named
was shot in the head
by one of his patients.

Spix's macaw is named after the first man to shoot one.



Brigham Young, founder of Salt Lake City, had 55 wives.

Until 1857, it was legal for British husbands to sell their wives. The going rate was £3,000 (£223,000 in today's money).

King Herod's first wife was called Doris.

Thomas Edison proposed to his second wife in Morse code.



The first escalator was for fun, rather than for practical purposes.

It was installed at Coney Island in New York and ridden by 75,000 people in its first two weeks.

Attendants bearing brandy and smelling salts stood at the top of the first escalator in Harrods, to revive shoppers who became lightheaded on the ride.

At least one person a week in the UK officially changes their middle name to "Danger."

In the American Civil War, 2% of the population died.

The equivalent today would be 6,278,280 deaths.

At the age of 19, J. S. Bach walked 420 miles to see a performance by the composer.

Buxtehude.

To *chork*is to make a noise like feet
walking in waterlogged shoes.

J'ai des rossignols

("I've got nightingales")

is French for

unexplained noises

coming from a car.

250,000 birds were killed by the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. About the same number die from crashing into window glass in the US every day.

Only half the passengers and crew who reached America on the *Mayflower* in November 1620 survived until the following spring.

Two-thirds of the world's caviar is eaten aboard the *QE2*.

There are 35,112 golf courses in the world, half of them in the USA.

All the world's golf courses put together cover more land area than the Bahamas.

The land around the Iron Curtain lay untouched for decades. In 1989, it was turned into a nature reserve 870 miles long, but less than 220 yards wide.

Victorian guidebooks advised women to put pins in their mouths to avoid being kissed in the dark when trains went through tunnels.

Beekeeping is illegal under the New York City Health Code, because bees are "naturally inclined to do harm."

Herring talk out of their asses, communicating by firing bubbles from their backsides that sound like high-pitched raspberries.

The filament of the first commercial light bulb, patented by Thomas Edison in 1880, was made of bamboo.

The tall chef's hat, or toque blanche, traditionally had a hundred pleats to represent the number of ways an egg could be cooked.

It was once suggested that

New York should be called Brimaquonx,
combining the names
of all the city's boroughs—
Brooklyn, Staten Island, Manhattan,
Queens, and the Bronx—
into one.

Tibet has a smaller GDP than Malta, but is 4,000 times its size.

Hamesucken
is the crime of assaulting someone
in their own home.

Hapax legomenon describes a word or phrase that has been used only once.

Haptodysphoria
is the feeling you get from
running your nails
down a blackboard.

Hydrophobophobia is the fear of hydrophobia.



Women buy
85% of the world's Valentine cards and
96% of all the candles
in America.

Einstein
gave his \$32,000 Nobel Prize money to
his first wife, Mileva,
as part of their divorce settlement.

The best-selling work of fiction
of the 15th century was
The Tale of the Two Lovers,
an erotic novel by the man who later
became Pope Pius II.

Tiramisu means "pick me up" in Italian. The names of the English rivers
Amber, Avon, Axe, Esk, Exe, Ouse,
Humber, Irwell, Thames, and Tyne
all mean "river" or "water"
in various ancient languages.

There are no rivers in Saudi Arabia.

The Onyx River is the only river in Antarctica. It flows for just 60 days a year in high summer.

The river with the largest
discharge volume
in Albania is the Seman.
About 100 miles north of the Seman
is the small town of
Puke.



The gold medals at London 2012 were the largest and heaviest ever awarded at a Summer Olympics, but are only 1.34% gold.

In 1979, the Uruguayan soccer player
Daniel Allende transferred
from Central Español to Rentistas
for a fee of 550 beefsteaks,
to be paid in installments
of 25 steaks a week.

In 1937, Gillingham FC
sold one of their players to Aston Villa for
three secondhand turnstiles,
two goalkeepers' sweaters, three cans of
weedkiller, and an old typewriter.

Typewriters used to be known as "literary pianos."

The raw materials needed to make a desktop computer, including 530 lbs. of fossil fuels, 50 lbs. of chemicals, and 3,330 lbs. of water, weigh two tons: about the same as a rhinoceros.

Exocet is French for "flying fish."

Ancient Scandinavians
believed that the Aurora Borealis was
the result of huge shoals of herring
reflecting light into the sky.

The word "döner"
in döner kebab
is Turkish for
"rotating."



Woodrow Wilson
kept a flock of sheep
on the White House lawn.
He sold the wool and gave the money
to the Red Cross.

Bill Clinton
was mauled by a sheep
at the age of eight and didn't learn
to ride a bicycle until he was 22.

Before signing the trade embargo against Cuba, John F. Kennedy got his press secretary to buy him 1,000 Cuban cigars.

Ronald Reagan's pet name for Nancy Reagan was "Mommy Poo Pants."

After George W. Bush
was re-elected president in 2004,
the number of calls from US citizens
to the Canadian Immigration authorities
jumped from 20,000 to 115,000 a day.

One of the main contributors to the original *Oxford English Dictionary* cut off his penis in a fit of madness.

The longest palindrome in the Oxford English Dictionary is "tattarrattat."

James Joyce used it in Ulysses:

"I knew his tattarrattat at the door."

The longest palindrome written by one poet about another is W. H. Auden's: "T. Eliot, top bard, notes putrid tang emanating, is sad. I'd assign it a name: Gnat dirt upset on drab pot toilet."



James Joyce
married a woman named Nora Barnacle.
She once asked him,
"Why don't you write books
people can read?"

During rehearsals for *Peter Pan*,

J. M. Barrie ordered Brussels sprouts
every day for lunch, but never ate them.

When asked why, he said:

"I cannot resist ordering them.

The words are so lovely to say."

Botanists
cannot tell the difference
between broccoli and cauliflower.

Rhubarb is a vegetable.

Some species of scorpion survive on one meal a year.

The Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul has only 5% of the country's population but provides 70% of its fashion models.

The trap-jaw ant has the fastest bite in the world: its jaws close 2,300 times faster than a blink of an eye.

Winston Churchill
is the only politician
to have won
the Nobel Prize for Literature.



In Bolivia,
the Quechua word for "baby" is

guagua—
pronounced "wah wah."

A baby echidna is called a "puggle."

Baby puffins are called "pufflings."

Baby hedgehogs are called "hoglets."

In 19th-century Britain, "mock-turtle" soup was often made from cow fetuses.

Dogs can smell where electric current has been and human fingerprints that are a week old.

Lord Byron's mail often contained locks of hair from adoring female fans.

Some of the clippings he sent them in return actually came from his pet Newfoundland dog,

Boatswain.

As soon as Lord Byron left England for the last time in 1816, his creditors entered his home and repossessed everything he owned, right down to his tame squirrel.



In 1899, Dr. Horace Emmett announced that the secret of eternal youth was injections of ground-up squirrel testicles. He died later the same year.

Squirrels can remember the hiding places of up to 10,000 nuts.

More than 10,000 seashells had to be crushed to make the purple dye to color a single Roman toga.

The Latin verb

manicare

means

"to come in the morning."



In the novel that the film *Pinocchio*was based on, Jiminy Cricket
was brutally murdered and
Pinocchio had his feet burned off and
was hanged by villagers.

Donald Duck's voice started out as an attempt to do an impression of a lamb.

Taurine,
the active ingredient in Red Bull,
is also present in
bile, breast milk, and spiders.

Sitting Bull was originally called Jumping Badger.



When Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba, he ordered all Monopoly sets to be destroyed.

The human body grows fastest during its few first weeks in the womb.

If it were to keep growing at the same rate for 50 years, it would be bigger than Mount Everest.

To produce one pound of beef requires 16,000 pounds of water.

The Turkish for "cannibal" is *yamyam*.



On June 30, 1998, England lost to Argentina in a World Cup penalty shootout. On that day, and for two days afterward, the number of heart attacks in England increased by 25%.

The first violence of the French Revolution took place at a luxury wallpaper factory.

In 1811, crimes punishable by death in Britain included sheep rustling, "strong evidence of malice" in children aged 7–14, living with gypsies for a month, and stealing cheese.

In 2011, cheese was the most stolen food in the world.



Buzz Aldrin's mother's maiden name was Moon.

Fritinancy is the buzzing of insects.

Most bees buzz in the key of A, unless they are tired, when they buzz in the key of E.

British moths include
the Uncertain, the Confused, the Magpie,
the Lackey, the Drinker, the Streak,
the Ruddy Highflyer, the Buff Arches,
the Figure of Eighty, the Anomalous, the
Dark Dagger, the Lettuce Shark,
the Isabelline Tiger, the Waved Tabby,
and the Mother Shipton.

The cake
for the Queen Mother's wedding
in 1923 weighed
half a ton.

The three
most searched-for individuals
in the Nobel Peace Prize
nomination database are
Mahatma Gandhi, Joseph Stalin,
and Adolf Hitler.

A *corpocracy* is a society ruled by corporations; a *coprocracy* is one ruled by shits.

The first cellphones cost \$3,000 each and had a battery life of about 20 minutes.

Q ;

The world's first weather map,
published in the London *Times*on April 1, 1875,
gave the weather for the *previous* day.

During the First World War, explosions from the battle of the Somme could be heard on Hampstead Heath.

Handschuhschneeballwerfer is German slang for "coward." It means someone who wears gloves to throw snowballs.

Two French kings were killed by tennis:

King Louis X (1289–1316) caught a
fatal chill after one game and

Charles VIII (1470–98) never recovered
from a coma after another one. He had
banged his head on the door lintel
on the way into the match.

Humans kill at least 100 million sharks a year, or about 11,000 an hour.

Female aphids give birth to other live female aphids that are already pregnant with yet more female aphids.

A flock of snipe is known as a "wisp."

The bee hummingbird is the world's smallest bird. It weighs about as much as a teabag.



John Ainsworth Horrocks (1818–46), who introduced camels to Australia, was also accidentally shot by one. He died of gangrene a month later, but had the camel executed first.

The Czech general Jan Zizka ordered his skin to be turned into a war drum after his death. It was beaten at times of national emergency, such as the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618.

George Kakoma, the composer of Uganda's national anthem, sued his government for lost royalties in 1962. He won the case and was paid 2,000 Ugandan shillings, equivalent to 50p.

A "jackstraw" is a 16th-century word for a person of no substance or worth.



A boar's ejaculation produces 70 times as much semen as a man's.

King George III's urine was blue.

The most times a person has been stung by bees without dying is 2,443.

A "conscientious objector"

was originally one who
refused to have their children inoculated.

Q ;

Skiing was introduced to Switzerland by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1893.

Nelson Mandela
was not removed from
the US terror watchlist
until 2008.

The polar explorers

Roald Amundsen and Ernest Shackleton
both wore Burberry clothing
on their expeditions.

Two-thirds of the world's population has never seen snow.



The French for cotton candy is barbe à papa (dad's beard).

The Hebrew for cotton candy is searot savta (grandma's hair).

The Afrikaans for cotton candy is *spookasem* (ghost breath).

Moer-my gesig is Afrikaans for "a face you want to punch."

Before he became prime minister of Australia in 1983, Bob Hawke got into the 1955 *Guinness Book of Records* for drinking two and a half pints of beer in 11 seconds.

11 of the 12 men to have walked on the Moon were in the Boy Scouts.

In 1937, comic acrobat Joseph Späh survived the *Hindenburg* airship disaster by jumping out of the window.

The French for

"window-shopping"
is faire du leche-vitrines or

"window-licking."

France has 36,782 mayors, five of whom are mayors of villages that ceased to exist 92 years ago.

In 1992, the rules governing what the French may legally christen their children were relaxed. The following year, the most popular name for baby boys was "Kevin."

The French philosopher Voltaire's explanation for why the fossils of seashells are found on mountaintops was that they had been left there by ancient picnickers with a taste for seafood.

The French mathematician Descartes had a theory that monkeys and apes were able to talk—but kept quiet in case they were asked to do any work.

Work
is three times more dangerous
than war.

A single human male produces enough sperm in two weeks to impregnate every fertile woman on the planet.

None of the best-known
English swear words
are of Anglo-Saxon origin.

Under the provisions of the
1912 Scottish Protection of Animals Act,
the Loch Ness monster
is a protected species.

Before they were famous, Clive James and Sylvester Stallone had jobs cleaning out lion cages.

Eric Clapton and Jack Nicholson grew up believing their grandmothers were their mothers and their mothers were their sisters.

Olivia Newton-John
was president of
the Isle of Man Basking Shark Society.

John Cleese, Michael Caine, and Marc Bolan all bought Rolls-Royces before they could drive. 0 ;

The last words of Henry Royce, co-founder of Rolls-Royce, were:

"I wish I'd spent more time in the office."

When *The Office* first aired in the UK in 2001, it had the second-lowest audience appreciation score on the BBC after women's bowling.

When Radio 4's Woman's Hour began in 1946, it had a male host. Early items included "Cooking with Whale Meat" and "I Married a Lion-tamer."

"Broadcasting" comes from farming it originally meant scattering seeds across a field.



Scolding and eavesdropping were illegal in England until 1967.

Abortion was illegal in the UK for only 164 years, between 1803 and 1967.

To avoid being caught breaking the law by a speed camera, you would have to be traveling at 28,000 miles per hour.

In 1999, a gang of thieves
was forced to do community service
along a road in Rotherham.
The next spring the daffodils
coming into bloom spelt out the words
"shag" and "bollocks."

A williwaw is a sudden gust of wind coming off a high plateau.

Mollynogging
is an old Lincolnshire word
for hanging out
with loose women.

Areodjarekput
is an Inuit word meaning
"to exchange wives
for a few days only."

A special bastard is someone born out of wedlock whose parents later married.

Although they didn't meet until they were teenagers,
Prince Albert and Queen Victoria were born in the same year and delivered by the same midwife.

In an average lifetime, human skin completely replaces itself 900 times.

The air in an average-sized room - weighs about 100 pounds.

The US navy has more aircraft carriers than all the other navies of the world combined.



An animal the size of an elephant could evolve to an animal the size of a sheep in 100,000 generations, but for an animal the size of a sheep to evolve to the size of an elephant would take 1.6 million generations.

After a meal, a Burmese python's heart grows by 40%.

Squid travel faster when they jump through the air than they do underwater.

Lava can flow
as fast as
a sprinting greyhound.

If melted down for scrap, a bronze medal from the London 2012 Olympics would be worth less than \$5.

In 2008, archaeologists in Cyprus found a 7th-century curse inscribed on a lead tablet that said, "May your penis hurt when you make love." Nobody knows who made the curse, or why.

The Malleus Maleficarum, a 15th-century treatise on witchcraft, warned that - witches stole men's penises and kept them in birds' nests.

The average person in the UK talks about the weather 44 times a month to 18 other people.



The average Briton suffers from 9,672 minor injuries over the course of a 78-year lifespan.

Britain's National Health Service is the world's 4th-largest employer after the US Defense Department, the Chinese Red Army, and Walmart.

The NHS has halved superbug deaths and saved 10,000 lives in the last four years simply by getting doctors and nurses to wash their hands.

If everyone in the world washed their hands properly, a million lives could be saved a year.

Mundungus n. The stench of tobacco.

Quaquaversal adj.
Going off in all directions.

Pixilated adj.

Slightly mad or confused,
having been led astray by pixies.

Rasceta n.
The creases
on the inside of the wrist.



The first commercial chewing gum appeared in 1871, after Thomas Adams had failed to make car tires from the same ingredients.

The first chewing gum made by
William Wrigley Jr. (in 1892)
was given away free
with his baking powder.

In 2012, Kraft rebranded its international division Mondelez, not realizing that this means "oral sex" in Russian.

Before the Queen puts her shoes on, a member of the royal household wears them first to make sure they are comfortable.



Spiders are extremely carnivorous.

10,000 spiders sealed in a room

will eventually result in

one enormously fat spider.

Americans eat 500 million pounds of peanut butter a year, enough to coat the floor of the Grand Canyon.

Every month in the Netherlands, 133 billion insects are killed colliding into cars.

Once a year, on August 22, Prince Hans-Adam II, the ruler of Liechtenstein, invites the whole country to a party at his house.

In online dating sites
you are more likely to come across
a teacher or lecturer
than someone from any other profession.

Since 1959, it has been legal to marry a dead person in France, providing you can prove the wedding was already planned.

Warmduscher
is German for "wimp":
a person so pathetic
he takes only hot showers.

A survey of a working-class area of London in 1915 found only 12 houses with baths. Nine of them were being used for storage. One-third of patent applications in America in 1905 were related in some way to the bicycle.

Every year, a thousand letters arrive in Jerusalem addressed to God.

In 2009, a retired policeman named
Geraint Woolford was admitted to
Abergale Hospital in north Wales
and ended up next to another retired
policeman called Geraint Woolford.
The men weren't related, had never met,
and were the only two people in the UK
called Geraint Woolford.

Geraint is the only word spoken in England and Wales that rhymes with "pint"—though in Scotland you might hear "behint" (Scots for "behind").

0,

There are two rhymes in English for purple: *curple*, a strap passing under a horse's tail, and *hirple*, to walk along dragging one leg behind the other.

The African giant pouched rat can smell tuberculosis 50 times faster than a laboratory scientist can identify it.

Electrons move along an electricity cable about as fast as honey flows.

80% of people who die from anorexia are aged at least 45.

A red blood cell can make a complete circuit of your body in 20 seconds.

If your stomach acid got on to your skin it would burn a hole in it.

A pumping human heart can squirt blood a distance of 30 feet.

When we blush, our stomach lining goes red too.

Christopher Columbus suffered from arthritis in his wrist as a result of a bacterial infection caught from a parrot.

John Wayne
once won Lassie the Dog
in a game of poker.

The founder of match.com,
Gary Kremen, lost his girlfriend
to a man she met on
match.com.

It is impossible to block Mark Zuckerberg on Facebook.

Despite playing the Fonz for ten years in the sitcom *Happy Days*, Henry Winkler never learned to ride a motorcycle.

The maize needed to fill a single Range Rover's gas tank with biofuel would feed a person for a whole year.

J. R. R. Tolkien typed the 1,200-page manuscript of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy with two fingers.

Quantophrenia is an obsessive reliance on statistics.

The first published crossword was called a word-cross.

The hand jive was invented at the Cat's Whiskers club in London.

The premises were so small and cramped that there was enough room only for people to dance with their hands.

Feeding curry to a sheep reduces the amount of methane in its farts by up to 40%.

More than half the trash collected on the summit of Ben Nevis is banana peel.



You could listen to a radio on the Moon but it's virtually impossible aboard a submarine.

Radio waves travel much more easily through space than through water.

Areas of the Moon include the Ocean of Storms, the Marsh of Decay, and the Lake of Death.

By law, buskers in Dublin must have a repertoire of at least 20 songs.

The opposite of plankton is *nekton*—creatures that move through water at will, rather than merely drifting. Fish, dolphins, and humans are nekton.

Q ;

When John Hetherington
ventured out in public
wearing the first top hat,
it was considered so shocking that
children screamed, women fainted,
and a small boy broke his arm
in the chaos.

In October 2008, inflation in Zimbabwe reached 231,000,000%.

The average car in Britain is parked for 96% of the time.

Casanova was a librarian.

India has almost 155,000 post offices: more than any country in the world and almost twice as many as China.

Chess, Ludo, and Chutes and Ladders were all invented in ancient India.

Chutes and Ladders was called
Moksha Patam—"the path to liberation."

Southeast England has a lower annual rainfall than Jerusalem or Beirut.

50 to 100 people kill themselves
on the London Underground each year,
but official records state that
only three babies
have ever been born there,
in 1924, 2008, and 2009.

Q ;

Women make
25% of the films in Iran,
compared to
4% in the US.

By 2025, there will be more
English speakers in China
than in the rest of the world put together.

A new skyscraper is built in China every five days.

By 2016, there will be four times as many as in the whole of the US.

The electrical energy
that powers each cell in our bodies
works out at 27 million volts per yard,
the equivalent voltage
of a bolt of lightning.

The Netherlands exports more soy sauce than Japan.

Tokyo
has three times as many
Michelin-starred restaurants
as Paris.

Bricklehampton is the longest place name in the UK with no repeated letters.

A vulture can safely swallow enough botulinum toxin to kill 300,000 guinea pigs.



More than seven times
as many people in the UK
visit museums and galleries every year
as attend Premier League soccer games.

Manchester United is the most hated brand in Britain and the 7th most hated in the world.

Angola has the world's best record at soccer penalty shootouts.

They have never lost one.

Ants nod to each other as they pass.



The Swiss own more guns per head than the Iraqis.

Saudi women
have won the right to vote,
but not the right
to drive to the polling station.

In Norway, "Odd" and "Even" are common male first names.

You can even (oddly)
have "Odd-Even."

Richard the Lionheart's younger brother, John, was nicknamed "Dollheart."



A *smellsmock* is a priest who indulges in extracurricular activities with his flock.

Japanese sheep go "meh."

Gymnophoria is the sense that someone is mentally undressing you.

A gynotikilobomassophile is one who loves to nibble women's earlobes.



The Afrikaans for an elephant's trunk is slurp.

Brenda means "inside" in Albanian.

Baghdad means "God's gift" in Persian.

The first man to use the word "bored" was Lord Byron in 1823.

(1)

The world's oldest living thing is a patch of Mediterranean seagrass between Spain and Cyprus.

It is estimated to be 200,000 years old.

The 225-year-old typeface of the tea company Twinings is the oldest continuously used commercial logo in existence.

Every time he made a cup of coffee,
Beethoven counted out exactly 60 beans
to make sure it was always
exactly the same strength.

A female chimpanzee in a fit of passion has the strength of six men.

Higgs bosons, assuming they exist at all, exist for approximately one zeptosecond—a thousandth of a billionth of a billionth of a billionth of a second.

The Hundred Years' War lasted for 116 years.

There are more pigs in China
than in the next
43 pork-producing countries combined.

Some pigs suffer from mysophobia, the fear of mud.

Tyrosemiophile n.
One who collects
cheese labels.

Ultracrepidarian n.
Someone who doesn't know what they're talking about.

Zemblanity n.

Bad luck occurring
just as expected:
the opposite of serendipity.

Zinzulation n.

The sound made by power saws.

The seven years' preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics reduced unemployment in the city to zero and increased the average income by 89.9%.

Many of the doves released at the opening ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics were accidentally roasted alive when the Olympic flame was lit.

More than 50% of Britain's medals in the 2012 London Olympics were won in sports where the athlete is sitting down or kneeling.

At the 2012 London Olympics, which lasted for 17 days, the athletes were provided with 150,000 free condoms—approximately 15 each.

0, ;

British troops in India
during the Second World War were issued
the memorable advice:
"Defeat the Axis,
Use Prophylaxis."

In 1951, more than 200 British MPs were voted in by over 50% of their electorate. In 2001, none were.

99% of all the words in the

Oxford English Dictionary

do not derive from Old English,

but 60% of the most

commonly used words do.

Francach is an Irish word that means both "rat" and "Frenchman."

Argentine scientists have discovered that giving hamsters Viagra helps them recover from jet lag up to 50% faster.

To *dringle* is to waste time in a lazy manner.

The UK is the fattest nation in the European Union and the 28th-fattest in the world.

The USA is the 9th-fattest nation in the world. Eight of the top ten are Pacific island nations, led by Nauru, Micronesia, and the Cook Islands.

The 1 million inhabitants of the Chinese city of Zhuji make 8 billion pairs of socks a year:

35% of total worldwide sock production.

In Italy, 13
. is not an unlucky number,
but 17 is.

Kailash Singh of India stopped washing after his wedding 38 years ago, hoping it would help him to have a son. To date, he has seven daughters.

Schimpf-los is a 24-hour German hotline that allows customers to release pent-up aggression by swearing at telephone operators.

Chamois can
balance on a ledge
less than two inches wide.

Three-quarters of the French take their annual holiday in France.

At the 1900 Paris Olympics, winners were awarded paintings instead of medals.

To "baffle" someone once meant to subject them to public disgrace by hanging their picture upside down.

Edward Elgar (1857–1934) is the only major composer to have mastered the bassoon.

The Wars of the Roses
weren't called that.
Sir Walter Scott invented the name
four centuries after the conflict.

A walleteer
is an indispensable word
for someone who has a wallet.

Before becoming an artist, Magritte was a professional wallpaper designer.

The playwright
Tennessee Williams (1911–83)
choked to death
on a bottle cap.

If the mass in a two-pound bag of sugar could be converted into energy, it would be enough to drive a car nonstop for 100,000 years.

There were no recorded boxing matches anywhere in the world between the fall of the Roman Empire and 1681.

Only three
of the original 60 clauses
of Magna Carta
are still in force.

The soldiers of Edward III dressed up as swans for banquets. The king himself came as a pheasant.

The EU spends over a billion Euros a year on translation.

A third of the 250 Americans who catch leprosy every year get it from armadillos.

90% of the bullets bought by Britain's Ministry of Defence are used for training purposes.

The number of ten-year-olds in Britain who hold legal shotgun licenses is 26.

More than a third of the world's smokers are Chinese.

A lethal dose of caffeine is about 50 double espressos.

Red Bull was originally called Red Water Buffalo.



President Obama's secret-service nickname is "Renegade." Ronald Reagan's nickname was "Rawhide," Bill Clinton's was "Eagle," and George W. Bush was known as "Trailblazer."

MI5 used to own special kettles that it kept specifically for steaming open envelopes.

Sitting in a 15-minute meeting uses more energy than Usain Bolt expends over three 100-meter sprints.

Almost any domestic cat can run faster than Usain Bolt.



Over a distance of about a mile, a carrier pigeon is faster than a fax machine.

Modern homing pigeons find it more convenient to follow highways and beltways and turn left and right at junctions rather than using their in-built navigational abilities.

Brazil nuts are the world's most radioactive natural food.

The Oxford English Dictionary takes 9,000 words to describe the 45 different meanings of "at."



A male rhinoceros beetle can lift 850 times its own body weight.

Alan Turing,
the father of computer science,
chained his mug to a radiator
to stop anyone else at work from using it.

The proud owner of the first silicone breast implant was a dog called Esmeralda.

There are only two beret factories left in France.



In 1367, King Charles V of France explicitly banned the wearing of shoes shaped like penises.

In 2008, pet hamsters were banned in Vietnam.

Monty Python's *Life of Brian* was marketed in Sweden as "The film that's so funny, it was banned in Norway."

The banning of the fez in Turkey in 1925 led to riots, executions, and a thriving fez-smuggling trade.



The Turkish for "ski" is kayak.

Dalek
is Croatian for
"far-away thing."

Smegma is Latin for "detergent."

The Afrikaans for "astrology" is sterrewiggelary.



Due to an administrative error in the 11th century, there was no Pope John XX.

Vatican City
is the only place in the world
where cash machines
offer instructions in Latin.

Since the Second World War, only 20 babies born in the UK have been named Adolf.

The "G-spot" was nearly called the Whipple Tickle—after Professor Beverley Whipple, who coined the expression that we know today.

Cow's hooves are used to make the foam in fire extinguishers.

The first potatoes introduced to Britain were used to make desserts.

In 1976,
one person in the USA
was killed by an outbreak of swine flu,
but the vaccine introduced to combat it
killed 25.

There are 1,000 times
as many bacteria
in your gut
as there are stars
in the Milky Way.



Bacteria
are about as different
from viruses as
metronomes are
from giraffes.

Most antibiotics are made from bacteria.

Bacteria can get viruses.

Viruses can get viruses.

A new one recently discovered in a French cooling tower was found to be infected by another, smaller one.

Scallops have up to 100 eyes.

The praying mantis has only one ear, which is located between its legs.

Until the 19th century the English word for actors was "hypocrites."

The Japanese for "handbag" is handubagu.



In 1947, the Duke of Windsor bought the Duchess of Windsor a black patent leather Hermès wheelbarrow.

In 1915, the lock millionaire Cecil Chubb bought his wife Stonehenge.

She didn't like it, so in 1918 he gave it to the nation.

Since 1815, Belgium has paid the Duke of Wellington's family more than \$46 million as a reward for winning the battle of Waterloo.

The First World War officially ended on October 3, 2010.

Wars kill more civilians than soldiers: in a war, the safest place to be is usually in the army.

The world's worst maritime disaster was the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* by a Soviet submarine in 1945, with the loss of 9,343 lives.

35 years after leaving school, the majority of people can still identify 90% of their classmates.

The speed of the wind has fallen by 60% in the last 30 years.

Half of all the species in the world live in the rainforest canopy.

The human brain is more complex than an exploding star or the US economy.

Every day,

plants convert

sunlight into energy

equivalent to six times

the entire power consumption of
human civilization.

For a million years, the human population of the Earth was less than 26,000.

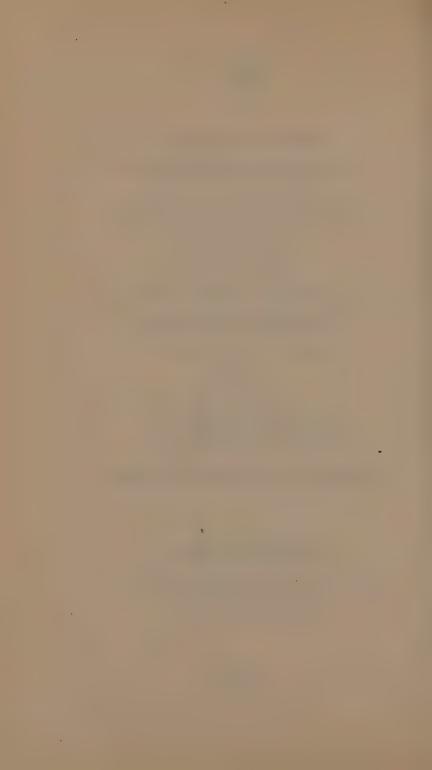


The last two speakers
of the Mexican language Zoque
are both in their seventies
and refuse to speak to each other.

More than one in five Americans believes that the world will end in their lifetime.

Thomas Edison's last breath is held in a vial at the Henry Ford museum in Detroit.

99% of all the species that have ever lived are now extinct.



A Note on Sources

For anyone keen to verify any of the facts in the book, they can be found online by going to www.qi.com/US1227 and typing the relevant hardcover page number in the search box. There is also a wealth of additional background detail about much of the information. Please do let us know if you have a quibble or a correction and add your own discoveries via our Twitter account @ qikipedia.



Index

This is here to help you find your favorite bits.

Like the facts themselves, we've kept it as simple as we can.

The rule is: each entry has only one word.

If you can't find "polar bears" try "bears"; for "Adam's apple" try "apple" or "Adams" and so on. Capital letters at the start of an entry indicate a proper noun or name—
"bugs" are insects and "Bugs" is the Bunny.

007, 26 3-D, 113 7-Up, 56

Abercrombie, 93
Aborigine, 87
abortion, 258
accidents, 53, 118, 190, 201
accountants, 128
acrobat, 253
actors, 43, 303
Adams, 94, 265, 266
adoptions, 24
adrenaline, 39
adultery, 196
advertising, 23, 31

Aerosmith, 46 Afghanistan, 13, 77 aid, 164 airports, 39, 47, 104, 161, 170 Albania, 198, 232 Albanian, 198, 282 alcohol, 80 Aldrin, 245 Alexanders, 3, 91 aliens, 50 Alka-Seltzer, 171 allergies, 145 amoebas, 168 anesthetics, 193 angina, 222 Anglo-Saxon, 255



Annes, 215 anorexia, 269 anteaters, 136 antelopes, 194, 195 anthems, 150, 205, 249 anthropologists, 18 Antigua, 68 ants, 17, 71, 136, 150, 238, 279 anuses, 34, 208 apes, 32, 254 aphids, 248 Apollo, 72, 144 apples, 94, 212 Apple, 30, 157 Arabic, 62, 120 archbishops, 103, 199 Archimedes, 108 armadillos, 293 arthritis, 73, 271 Arthurs, 213, 251 aspirin, 29 asses, 44, 111 asshole, 111 asteroids, 1, 144 asthma, 181 astrology, 299

astronauts, 72, 144 atoms, 15, 47, 65, 102, 104, 199 Aurora, 234 Austrian, 20, 143 awning, 46 Aztecs, 181

babies, 4, 5, 83, 89, 106, 111, 136, 165, 177, 199, 206, 239, 254, 276, 300 baboons, 172 Bach, 226 bacon, 169 bacteria, 58, 74, 141, 168, 301, 302 badgers, 101, 154, 242 baking, 265 balloons, 52 bananas, 68, 273 bands, 142 Bang, 155 banging, 210, 247 Bangladesh, 205 banks, 30, 56, 158



bans, 35, 65, 163, 170, 298 barley, 122 barn, 117 barnacle, 141 baseball, 45 basketball, 46 bassoon, 291 bastards, 137, 259 bats, 111, 199 baths, 267 bathwater, 134 battles, 40, 147, 171, 196, 247, 304 Baum, 109 BBC, 28, 187, 257 beans, 162, 283 beards, 194, 252 bears, 37, 95, 98, 99 beavers, 199 beds, 4, 202, 217 beefsteaks, 233 beekeeping, 16, 228 beer, 134, 183, 253 bees, 204, 228, 245, 250 Beethoven, 283 beetles, 47, 209, 210, 297 behind, 36, 144, 268, 269 beliefs, 7, 65, 145, 234, 256, 307 Bens, 192, 273 bends, 83 berets, 297 Bethlehem, 35 Beyoncé, 8 Bible, 66, 26, 92, 194, 200 bicycles, 55, 161, 235, 268 bile, 242 billiards, 31 billionaires, 109 biofuel, 272 Bills, 53, 107, 235, 295 biologists, 18 birds, 53, 125, 133, 138, 152, 181, 182, 226, 248 Birds, 16 birdseed, 53 birthdays, 51, 56 biscuits, 28 bishops, 38, 120, 217



bison, 155, 175 blackberries, 137 blackboard, 230 blackcurrants, 130 bleating, 44 blinking, 203 Blitz, 32 blood, 4, 270 blue, 91, 135, 214, 250 boa, 69 boar, 250 boats, 3, 209 Boatswain, 240 Boeing, 51, 136, 165 Bog, 214 Bolt, 204, 295 bombing, 69 bombs, 24, 199 bonobos, 83 bookseller, 127 Boring, 149 bottoms, 10, 23, 46, 98, 156, 181, 196 botulism, 135, 278 boxes, 64, 114, 125, 134, 167 boxing, 185, 292

Braille, 30 brains, 36, 114, 306 bran, 222 breakfast, 134, 183, 190, 191, 222 breast, 297 breath, 182, 252, 307 Bricklehampton, 278 Brimaquonx, 229 Britain, 22, 38, 59, 70, 86, 109, 118, 128, 130, 167, 187, 201, 205, 221, 240, 244, 275, 279, 294, 301 British, 24, 25, 32, 88, 109, 112, 114, 120, 128, 135, 142, 151, 165, 188, 195, 221, 224, 225, 245, 287 broadcasting, 257 Broadmoor, 221 broccoli, 237 Broccoli, 38 brushes, 17, 141, 154 bubblewrap, 151



Budding, 63 buds, 110, 138 bugs, 17 Bugs, 219 bulbs, 14, 229 bullets, 13, 69, 120, 293 bulls, 33 Bulls, 242, 294 Burberry, 251 burglars, 196 butter, 11, 28, 185, 266 butterflies, 181 buttocks, 179 buzz, 245 Buzz, 245 buzzing, 245

Caesarean, 89
cabbage, 45
caffeine, 28, 133, 294
cake, 246
cages, 256
Cambridge, 67, 95, 101, 136, 213
camels, 153, 199, 249
canal, 191
canaries, 174

candles, 11, 231 cannabis, 53 cannibal, 243 cans, 67, 163 carbon, 28, 193 cardboard, 214 cards, 33, 51, 231 Cardiff, 35 carriers, 260 carrots, 145, 146 Carta, 292 Cartland, 188 cartoonists, 94 Casanova, 275 Castro, 3, 53, 243 cats, 74, 106, 119, 136, 169, 174, 295, 273 caterpillars, 23 catfish, 110 Catholics, 38, 62, 214 cauliflower, 237 caviar, 227 cellphones, 82, 201, 246 Cézanne, 55 chameleons, 199

chamois, 290



Charleses, 12, 15, 45, 48, 151, 167, 189, 197, 247, 298 Cheddar, 28 cheese, 244, 285 cheeseburgers, 55 cheetah, 119 chefs, 177, 178, 229 Chelmsford, 217 chemists, 63, 67 chemotherapy, 129 chewing, 265 chickenpox, 125 chickens, 125, 202 Chicken, 162 chihuahua, 57 chimney, 38 chimpanzees, 26, 75, 83, 220, 283 China, 26, 51, 83, 89, 173, 276, 277, 284 chisel, 67 chlamydia, 149 chocolate, 89, 133 choirboy, 217 Christmas, 66 chromosomes, 75

Churchill, 9, 10, 116, 238 chutes, 276 CIA. 121 cigars, 235 classmates, 305 clauses, 292 Cleese, 28, 256 clergy, 38 clicks, 121 clitoris, 124 clouds, 39 cobbler, 9, 216 Coca-Cola, 9, 133, 148, 190 cocaine, 28, 29, 124 cockroach, 177 cocks, 125 coconuts, 176, 216 codes, 6, 26, 73, 224 coffee, 133, 200, 283 Coleridge, 43 color, 71, 175, 241 computers, 107 condoms, 286 conjuror, 160 constituencies, 112



curvature, 94

contraceptives, 192 cooling, 302 cornflakes, 125 Cornish, 169, 182 corporations, 136, 246 cotton-candy, 252 coward, 247 cowpox, 125 cows, 88, 112, 125, 138, 170, 240 crabs, 199 cranberries, 202 crashes, 39, 42, 145 cricket, 45 crime, 77, 212, 221, 244 criminals, 7 crocodiles, 142, 181, 182 crocuses, 90 crossword, 273 crucifixion, 206 Cubism, 55 cuckoos, 199 culture, 18, 87, 205 curry, 273 curse, 262 Curtain, 228

custard, 105 daffodils, 258 Dalí, 105, 176 dandelions, 98 danger, 47, 255 Danger, 225 Darlington, 15 Darwin, 109 dead, 34, 225, 267 death, 32, 53, 149, 164, 176, 180, 210, 214, 216, 220, 244, 249, 263, 274, 292 Delight, 91 democracy, 25 denominations, 66 depression, 148 Descartes, 254 desertion, 77 desire, 19, 44 detergent, 299 dialing, 26 diamonds, 11 digestives, 28

dinosaurs, 57, 120



Disraeli, 149 divorce, 70 DNA, 68, 102 doctors, 14, 29, 153, 263 dogs, 74, 174, 240, 297 dolphins, 142, 200, 274 Dracula, 213 dragonflies, 175, 176 dreaming, 75 drivers, 38 driving, 184 drum, 249 Duck. 242 Dull, 149 Durham, 117 Dutch, 17, 64, 173 dwarfs, 218 dyslexia, 35

eagles, 181, 199
ear, 303
ears, 12
earthquakes, 119
Easter, 66
eavesdropping, 258
echidnas, 105, 239

Edinburgh, 59 eels, 199 eggs, 90, 105, 149, 206, 229 Eiffel, 211 Einstein, 93, 114, 231 electricity, 24, 25, 52, 89, 114, 269 electrons, 102, 204, 269 elephants, 39, 98, 197, 261, 282 embryos, 104 encyclopedias, 66, 92 energy, 55, 74, 89, 90, 132, 277, 292, 295, 306 enquiries, 188 escalators, 225 Escoffier, 177, 178 Eskimos, 193 Eton, 62, 134 Europe, 51, 72, 89, 118, 131 Eurovision, 50, 86 Everest, 16, 243 excrement, 181



executions, 50, 164, 249, 298 executives, 221 exhausts, 53 Exocet, 234 explorers, 251 explosions, 171, 247, 306 espressos, 294 Everest, 16, 243 extinguishers, 31 Exxon, 113, 226 eye, 41, 44, 71, 238 eyelashes, 42

Facebook, 139, 168, 271
Falklands, 13
Faroes, 59
farts, 273
fashion, 238
fathers, 28, 87, 95, 104, 297
fatties, 288
Fawlty, 117
fax, 296
feathers, 53, 152
feces, 71, 219

Ferrari, 46

ferrets, 110, 199 fez, 298 figs, 68 film, 98, 258 films, 104, 113, 167, 242, 277, 298 Finland, 42, 104 Finnish, 159, 169 fire, 301 fish, 100, 182, 234, 274 flags, 6, 196, 205 flamingos, 69 flats, 109 flies, 80 flocks, 214, 235, 248, 281 flu, 153, 310 follicles, 75 forests, 21, 148, 306 fossils, 48, 234, 254 fox, 22 Fox, 49, 145 Foxe, 217 France, 30, 43, 55, 187, 217, 254, 267, 290, 297, 298



French, 34, 54, 62, 118, 126, 154, 202, 211, 215, 226, 234, 244, 247, 252, 253, 254, 290, 302 friends, 43 frogs, 37, 111, 129, 177, 194, 199 fruit, 43, 68, 80 FTSE 100, 221 Fucking, 20 furniture, 23

galaxies, 1, 15, 84, 301
Gandhi, 246
Ganges, 30
gardens, 68, 197
Garland, 188
gas, 63, 129
gasoline, 63
Gatwick, 161
geese, 38
Genghis, 47
geography, 216
Geraints, 268
geraniums, 1
gerbils, 39

German, 100, 142, 169, 192, 207, 247, 267, 289 Germans, 143 Germany, 128 Gillette, 31 Glasgow, 35, 78 gloves, 247 glue, 25 gnomes, 197 goalkeepers, 233 goals, 79 goats, 161 God, 214, 268, 282 gold, 16, 101, 107, 123, 127, 185, 198, 233 golf, 102, 227 gonorrhea, 74 Google, 145, 222 goosebumps, 202 gorillas, 75, 83, 192 grading, 67 grandmothers, 256 graphene, 98 grasshoppers, 176 gravity, 203 gravy-boats, 209



grawlixes, 94
Greece, 25, 150
Greek, 26, 70, 76, 117, 141, 153
greyhound, 261
G-spot, 300
guidebooks, 228
guinea, 23, 172, 278
guitar, 23
Gulf, 69
gum, 265
guns, 70, 93, 280, 294

Hadrian, 77
hair, 75, 91, 116, 149, 203, 240, 252
hammer, 67
hammerheads, 142
hammering, 196
hamsters, 74, 288, 298
handbag, 303
handcuffs, 127
handwriting, 29, 86
hands, 75, 76, 192, 263, 273
hangover, 78
hares, 199

Harrods, 225 Harrow, 10 Harrys, 42, 117 Harvard, 71 Hastings, 147 hats, 22, 229, 275 Havana, 35 hearts, 3, 4, 261, 270 heart-attacks, 124, 244 Heathrow, 104 hedgehogs, 70 height, 16, 20, 31, 152, 178, 188 helicopters, 167 heresy, 214 heroin, 28, 29, 50 herons, 199 herring, 228, 234 Hickoks, 53 Higgs, 284 hippopotamuses, 176, 177 Hitler, 9, 32, 47, 143, 145, 187, 216, 246 Ho, 178 homosexuality, 197, 206



Honda, 118 honey, 269 hooves, 301 hormones, 145 horses, 21, 22, 70, 155, 269 hospital, 81 Houdini, 42 Hubble, 109 humans, 2, 4, 17, 26, 36, 41, 47, 71, 75, 76, 84, 88, 94, 102, 111, 130, 133, 135, 138, 154, 197, 203, 219, 240, 243, 248, 255, 260, 270, 274, 306 hummingbirds, 181, 182, 248 hurricanes, 119 hydrogen, 28, 104, 139 hypocrites, 303

Iceland, 185 Icelandic, 71, 124, 140 idiot, 70 igloo, 6 IKEA, 4, 13, 92

illiteracy, 7 IMAX, 123 impalers, 40 implant, 297 inability, 19 India, 30, 276, 287, 289 inflation, 34, 275 influenza, 153 injuries, 81 ink, 32 Inquisition, 2 insects, 17, 69, 245, 266 Internet, 6, 155, 209 Inuktitut, 80, 140 inventions, 29, 45, 46, 63, 67, 80, 148, 151, 156, 189, 273, 276, 291 invisibility, 32 iron, 90 Iron, 51, 228 islands, 6, 59, 64, 109, 174, 204, 288 Israel, 124, 170 ISS, 61, 123 Italian, 96, 100, 118, 153, 231 Italians, 9, 166



Italy, 9, 24, 56, 101, 289 Ivanhoe, 49

Jack-in-a-Box, 64 jackstraw, 249 Jacobites, 78 jagger, 218 jaguar, 181, 218 James's, 46, 66, 76, 109, 134, 236, 237, 256 jasmine, 200 Jaws, 104 jeans, 58 Jehovah, 66 jelly, 106 jellyfish, 211, 223 Jerome, 3 jive, 273 Joan, 188 Jockey, 22 jogging, 156 Joneses, 134, 136

Kali, 176 kangaroos, 3 kebab, 234 Kellogg's, 29, 125 kestrels, 156
Kindle, 11
kings, 12, 23, 37, 66, 95,
156, 166, 183, 187,
224, 247, 250, 293,
298
King, 223
kissing, 202, 228
knobs, 137
knots, 83
koalas, 149, 181
Kremen, 271
Kuwait, 69

ladders, 276
lamb, 242
languages, 13, 108, 131, 140, 169, 176, 177, 219, 232, 307
lapwings, 199
Lassie, 271
laundry, 81
lava, 261
lavatories, 141, 156, 172
lawnmower, 63
lawyers, 163

1

lead, 51, 78, 120, 210, 262 Lego, 20 legs, 104, 171, 177, 269, 303 lemons, 52 Leonardo, 10, 94 leprosy, 293 librarian, 275 Liechtenstein, 20, 60, 266 lighthouses, 59 lightning, 55, 277 limbs, 130 Linnaeus, 68 lions, 39, 256 lion-tamer, 257 Lisa, 10 litter, 144 lizards, 199 lobsters, 199 Loch, 113, 255 logos, 105, 283 London, 21, 32, 37, 69, 97, 109, 128, 132, 165, 177, 178, 198, 233, 267, 273, 276, 286

Loony, 57 loops, 179 Louvre, 10 love, 50 lunatic, 54

M6, 81 macaw, 223 machines, 148, 296, 300 mackerel, 163 Mafia. 9 Maiden, 51 Magna, 292 malaria, 133, 160 mantis, 303 marshmallow, 61 Marx, 61, 199 match.com, 271 Mayflower, 227 mayors, 254 McDonald's, 29, 78, 106 meaning, 18, 38, 100, 135, 189, 259 measles, 183 meatballs, 13



medals, 41, 54, 233, 262, 286 medicine, 7, 29 Mexico, 170 Mexican, 307 mice, 128 Michelin, 278 Microsoft, 29 microwaves, 52, 150 midwife, 260 milk, 105, 133, 148, 176, 242 Minh, 178 mirrors, 57 missiles, 73 missions, 72, 144 models, 238 moles, 143, 199 mollynogging, 259 Mona, 10 Monet, 54 monkeys, 172, 254 Monopoly, 243 monsters, 57, 255 Moon, 20, 88, 123, 144, 245, 274 moon dust, 52

morning, 201, 241
Morse, 224
mother-in-law, 216
mothers, 256
moths, 95, 245
mountains, 16, 31, 87, 243
mouths, 36, 228
Mozart, 31, 143
mummy, 187
mushrooms, 130
mustache, 187, 198
Mussolini, 59
mustard, 129
mutants, 135

nails, 67, 230
Napoleon, 196
navies, 34, 177, 201,
260
Nazis, 32, 42, 216
Neasden, 9
nests, 262
neutrinos, 12, 102
newspapers, 31, 119
Niagara, 48, 76
nipples, 166

1

nitrogen, 28 nitroglycerin, 222 Nobel, 101, 219, 220, 231, 238, 246 novels, 81, 93, 104, 173, 186, 189, 207, 231, 242 nutmeg, 130 nuts, 241, 296

nylon, 28

octopuses, 3, 196 oil, 59, 195, 226 olives, 200 Olympics, 70, 170, 215, 233, 262, 286, 290 operators, 221, 289 orange, 52, 76, 91, 174 organism, 15, 18 ospreys, 199 ostriches, 90, 153, 154 ovens, 52 owls, 139, 199 oxygen, 28 oysters, 83, 125 oystercatchers, 125 ozone, 1

Paddington, 95 painting, 10, 54, 214 palindromes, 236 pandas, 121, 122 paper, 48, 88, 98, 141, 156, 220 paperclip, 62 papers, 140 paradox, 43 parliament, 112, 213, 238 parrots, 36, 271 parties, 82, 165, 183, 266 patents, 36 pavements, 161 peanut, 11, 266 pearl, 14 peas, 16 pedant, 169 pelicans, 199 pencils, 98, 129, 189 penises, 17, 101, 125, 141, 158, 189, 236, 262, 298 Pepsi, 56 personality, 18



Peters, 63, 104, 237 pets, 136, 235, 240, 298 pheasant, 293 phobias, 82, 150, 230, 284 photographs, 5, 168 photons, 72 physics, 117 pi, 97, 121 Picasso, 10, 54 pidgin, 64, 167 pigeons, 54, 296 pigs, 23, 172, 278, 284 Pinocchio, 242 pins, 42, 228 pixies, 264 pizza, 97 plankton, 274 planning, 41 plastic, 98 Plato, 65 platypus, 105 pleurisy, 80 Pluto, 166 poetry, 82, 172, 213 poets, 172, 213 police, 77, 201, 268

politicians, 70, 215 polling, 280 pools, 16 Poopó, 60 pop, 66 popes, 136, 231, 300 post, 25, 98, 276 Pots, 215, 216 potatoes, 42, 43, 75, 301 poverty, 83, 163 power, 51, 74, 114, 243, 277, 285, 296, 306 prawns, 199 praying, 303 pregnancy, 129, 175, princes, 151, 167, 260, 266 Pringles, 40 prisoners, 163, 164 Prius, 218 PR, 32 psychologists, 18 psychopaths, 221 publishers, 63, 93, 186 puffins, 239 pyramids, 157



Pythagoras, 65 Pythons, 261, 298

QE2, 227 queens, 2, 40, 95, 183, 188, 217, 219, 246, 260, 265

rabbits, 111, 219 racehorses, 22 radishes, 196 Radcliffe, 117 rage, 170 raspberries, 1, 127, 228 rats, 57, 269, 287 ravens, 32, 199 Raving, 57 razors, 31 readers, 31, 140 Reading, 35 Reagan, 235, 295 record, 48 records, 33, 58, 170, 204, 253, 276, 279, 292 religion, 26 Renaissance, 139 revolutions, 178, 244

rhinos, 175 rhubarb, 237 rhymes, 268, 269 Ribena, 130 rice, 118, 122 Richards, 49, 73, 217, 280 riots, 79 rivers, 232 roller-coaster, 119 Rolls-Royce, 256, 257 Rooney, 161 rope, 78, 83 roses, 94 Roses, 291 Rotherham, 258 rubber, 142 rubbish, 37 rules, 63, 185, 254 rumbles, 171 Russia, 26 Russian, 91, 126, 208 Russians, 7

Saddam, 9 saffron, 90, 91 saints, 24, 60, 134 salamander, 175



sales, 29, 41, 46, 65 saliva, 105 salt, 58, 195 Saudi, 130, 232, 280 sausages, 84 saws, 64, 285 scallops, 303 schizophrenia, 99 Schoenberg, 180 school, 10, 28, 73, 117, 207, 305 scorpion, 238 Scouts, 253 Scrabble, 73, 132 screwdriver, 67 seafood, 254 seahorses, 182 seal, 211 seashells, 241, 254 Seman, 232 semen, 32, 250 semicolons, 186 sex, 5, 17, 44, 110, 124, 161, 176, 191 Sebastians, 38 Shakespeare, 12, 60, 86, 172

shamans, 214 Shanghai, 122 sharks, 104, 148, 245, 248, 256 shaving, 154 sheep, 154, 235, 244, 261, 273, 281 ships, 59 shoes, 9, 178, 226, 265, 298 shotguns, 93, 294 showers, 267 shrew, 88 silicone, 297 silkworms, 110, 193 silver, 54, 127 sins, 220 sisters, 38, 100, 173, 200, 256 skiing, 251, 299 slate, 64 slavery, 79, 132 slide, 63 sloth, 220 Slough, 21 smartphones, 36 smegma, 299

1

smells, 1, 32, 39, 52, 141, 200, 240, 269, 281 Smiths, 46 smoking, 163 snails, 199 snakes, 69, 151, 171 snipe, 248 snow, 151, 251 snowballs, 247 snowflake, 66 soccer, 45, 79, 161, 233, 244, 279 socks, 208, 289 sofa, 188 soil, 15, 141 Solar, 102, 144 songbird, 133 songs, 12, 50, 66, 274 soup, 181, 240 soy, 278 Spanish, 2, 33, 118, 127, 178, 180, 208 sparrows, 122, 153 speed, 97, 212, 258, 305 speeding, 97 sperm, 68, 255 spiders, 17, 242, 266

spies, 32 spine, 94 sponge, 191 spoons, 15, 146 sprouts, 237 squid, 261 squirrels, 240, 241 stagecoach, 72 Stalin, 214, 216, 246 Stallone, 256 stamps, 25, 98 Starbucks, 162 stars, 15, 87, 301 statistics, 272 stations, 61, 74, 123, 132,170, 280, 296 steel, 98 stomachs, 96, 135, 220, 270 Stonehenge, 304 storks, 199 strawberries, 76, 155 streets, 162, 220 stuffing, 138 styrofoam, 98 submarines, 274, 305 sugar, 34, 292



suicide, 13, 77 sun, 7, 48, 72, 84, 89, 102, 166, 180, 186, 193, 198, 204 sunflower, 89 sunlight, 35, 306 Sunny, 91 superbugs, 263 supermarkets, 41 supertankers, 4 swans, 86, 138, 199, 293 swearing, 94, 255, 289 Swedish, 13, 40 sweet corn, 52 swimming, 16, 30, 37 swine, 301 syphilis, 160

tadpoles, 37 tarmac, 81 taste, 1, 110, 138, 254, 265 taurine, 242 tax, 12, 113, 123, 163 taxi, 43 tea, 28, 81, 121, 133, 248, 283

tea-cosy, 81 teachers, 176, 216, 267 teeth, 20, 104, 141 telegrams, 186 telephones, 71, 188, 210, 289 telescopes, 109 tennis, 247 testes, 155 thalidomide, 28 Thatcher, 67, 211 thieves, 20 thigh, 209 thrashing, 44 thrush, 192 thumbscrew, 59 Thunderbirds, 166 Tibet, 229 tiepins, 101 ties, 46, 87 tigers, 104, 218, 245 time, 4, 10, 42, 48, 65, 72, 92, 100, 107, 117, 118, 120, 123, 153, 165, 191, 192, 202, 203, 240, 250, 257, 275, 283, 288

1

Tintin, 158 tiramisu, 231 tires, 265 titin, 158 TNT, 28 toast, 55 toasters, 35 tobacco, 34, 264 toenails, 38 toes, 42 toilet, 141, 156, 201, 236 Tonto, 33 toothbrush, 17, 141 torture, 59 Tourette's, 223 towels, 205 towers, 117, 211, 302 towns, 41, 137, 146, 232 trains, 97, 114, 165, 228 translation, 293 trash, 273 trees, 43, 141, 148, 203 Tree, 43 triangles, 65 trolley, 170

trombone, 62 Trotsky, 213 trousers, 201 tuberculosis, 269 tunnels, 228 Turkey, 298 Turkish, 234, 243, 299 turnstiles, 233 TV, 74, 78, 92, 167, 124, 162, 167, 206 tweets, 121 Twinings, 283 twit, 207 Twitter, 5, 152 typewriters, 233 typist, 194

umbrellas, 179
Underground, 97, 128,
132, 165, 276
underpants, 65, 91, 95
universe, 1, 87, 102,
204
universities, 67, 71, 95,
117
uranium, 127



Uranus, 180 urine, 129, 139, 156, 250

vaginas, 3 Valentine, 231 vampires, 84 Vaseline, 80 Vatican, 77, 136, 300 vegans, 101 vegetables, 82, 237 vegetarians, 101, 151, 197 vending, 148 Venus, 129 Viagra, 137, 288 Victoria, 95, 188, 260 Victorians, 38, 43, 101, 228 VIPs, 103 Virgins, 97, 109 viruses, 302 Vlad, 40 voles, 156 voting, 57, 280 vultures, 199, 278 vuvuzela, 1

waffles, 16 Wagamama, 112 Wales, 79, 268 walkie-talkie, 211 wallet, 291 wallpaper, 151, 244, 291 Warhol, 91 wars, 33, 69, 124, 129, 130, 187, 225, 247, 249, 255, 284, 287, 291, 300, 304, 305 wart, 85 washerwoman, 216 wasps, 17 water, 15, 30, 36, 72, 90, 105, 120, 147, 169, 188, 195, 232, 234, 243, 261, 274 Waterloo, 171, 304 Waynes, 50, 161, 271 weather, 118, 119, 144, 247, 262 weddings, 205, 246, 267, 289 weight, 74, 98, 100, 123, 169, 234, 243, 297



Welsh, 100, 125, 126 whales, 36, 155, 257 Wheat, 134 wheelbarrow, 304 Whippy, 67 whistling, 86 Wikipedia, 92 windows, 27, 213, 226, 253 wire, 214 witches, 262 wives, 47, 127, 173, 224, 259 wombs, 104, 111, 243 wombats, 71 women, 57 woodpecker, 203

Warcraft, 26
worms, 12, 15, 100, 193
wrenches, 63, 64
wrists, 264, 271
WTF, 154
WW1, 33, 129, 247,
304
WW2, 69, 287, 300

yellow, 91 Young, 224 YouTube, 108

Zeus, 173 zinc, 89 zoos, 69, 83 Zuckerberg, 271

5

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